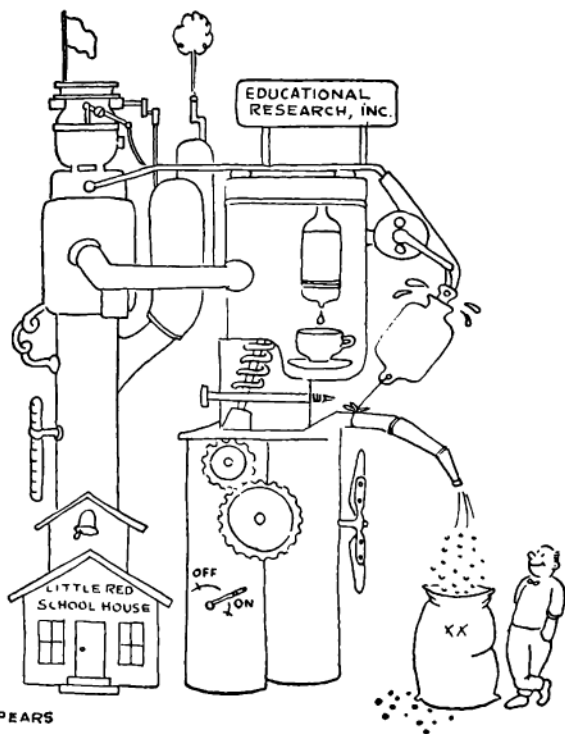


HAROLD SPEARS

THE TEACHER  
AND  
CURRICULUM PLANNING

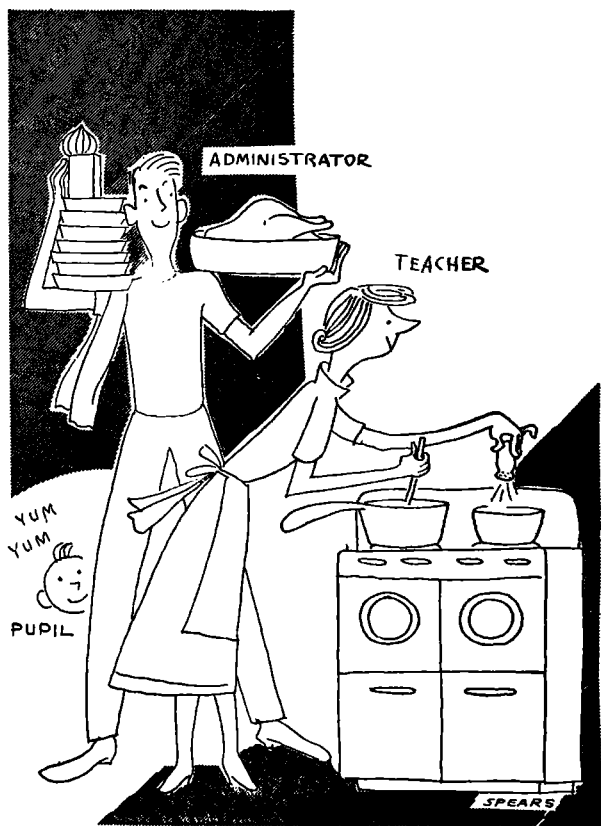








THE TEACHER  
*and*  
CURRICULUM PLANNING



CURRICULUM-PLANNING CALLS FOR CO-OPERATIVE  
ACTION

# THE TEACHER AND CURRICULUM PLANNING

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*Illustrated by the Author*

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To  
STEPHEN



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THE TEACHER  
*and*  
CURRICULUM PLANNING



## CURRICULUM STUDY

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## INTRODUCTION

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*A book on the subject of curriculum study does not imply that schools are doing a poor job.*

Rather it implies that today most schools have accepted curriculum study as a natural and highly essential part of the teaching job. There are often new courses or new procedures to be added, but curriculum study can be successful even if it does not result in any major changes in the school.

Curriculum study, as a natural and highly essential part of school work, throws administrators, supervisors, teachers, and teacher trainers together in a search for the best that can be done for the children and the youth of America. At times, parents and pupils participate. In such a study, ideas of teacher training institutions and the state department of public instruction are invariably considered. There is today much co-operation between the college and the local school district. The ideas of the former find trial in the latter, and the experiences of the latter find attention in the former.

From all of this curriculum enterprise of the past quarter of a century there have emerged a number of principles to guide further work in the field. In this book we set out sixty-two of these principles, and develop them with the aid of examples taken from experience, and with some cartoons of the author's.

The principles are numbered to facilitate discussion, comparison, and reference; this method represents a different idea in curriculum books. The book has been kept short for fear of obscuring the basic points by longer discussion. The author had to think through the longer book, but he restrained the temptation to put it all in the manuscript.

It is hard to write a curriculum book, because some people expect so much. Nobody knows enough to speak from a distant workroom and tell a local school system what or how it needs to teach. However, if we can keep working at the job of establishing sound principles of education, the local staff can better determine what instructional practices are needed in their classrooms. They have to work at the job in the classroom and study it on the outside. It is unusual today to find a school system that does not accept curriculum study as a part of the job.



## A BOOK OF FOUR PARTS

The book has four parts. The first discusses the meaning of the curriculum, since so many of us use the term in so many different ways. The second treats the foundations of the curriculum, that is, its relationship to other elements in the social setting. The third develops the principles that govern actual school reorganization. The fourth has to do with the operation of the curriculum, once it is installed in the school.

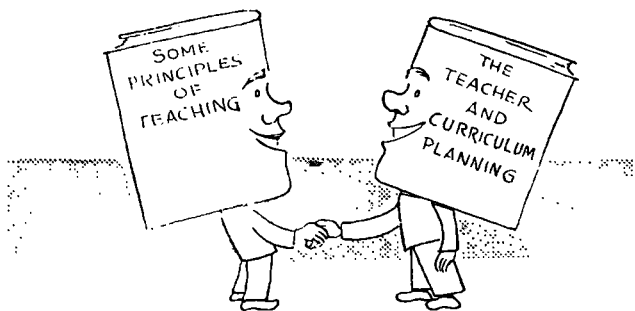
*The point of emphasis throughout the book is the teacher, for it is well recognized that no school program is going to succeed unless teachers have had an active part in its planning.*

Had the book been longer, there would naturally have been a large section dealing with the teacher's experience with the curriculum in the classroom. The treatment here emphasizes planning the curriculum. For the work of the teacher in the classroom, the author refers the reader to his book, *Some Principles of Teaching*,\* which is likewise set up as a small book in an organizational style similar to this one. The two together could be used as the basis of a professional course.

\* Published also by Prentice-Hall.

Both elementary and secondary education are included in this treatment, just as they were in *Some Principles of Teaching*. Sound principles of curriculum planning are as valid for one as for the other. It is intended that the book serve both college courses and teacher study groups in the local schools where instructional improvement is being emphasized. As well as getting into campus classrooms and local faculty meetings, maybe this small volume will find its way into the pockets of individual teachers. At least it was built to fit them.

HAROLD SPEARS



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## I. THE MEANING OF THE CURRICULUM

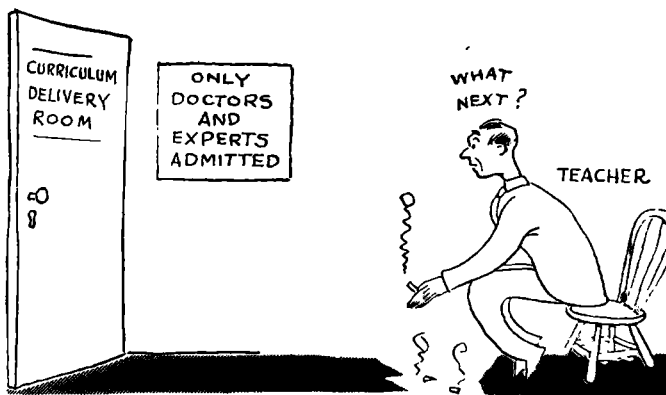
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1. *The term curriculum has been somewhat elusive for the teacher.*

It was only about two or three decades ago that the word *curriculum* was rather abruptly added to the teacher's vocabulary, and for a long time it seemed to have little if any practical meaning for the average teacher. Even the definition in the standard dictionary was confusing—and still is.

For years curriculum development was used to denote something too highly complicated or technical for the common run of classroom teachers. School after school sent the expert and the master teacher behind closed doors to prepare a new curriculum, or to reorganize the one in use. Once perfected, these new programs were wheeled out into the light of day and were announced to the teacher and parent as the new look in schoolrooms.

Such curriculum revision was the vogue for many years. The thorough renovation in any one school



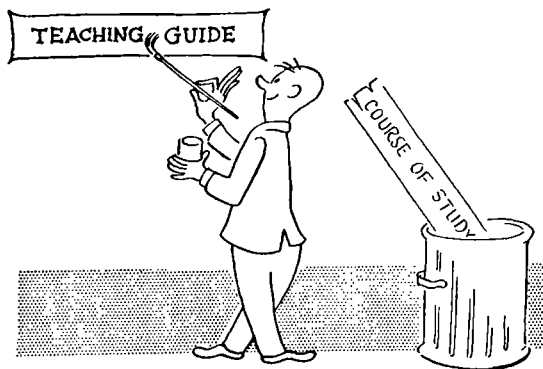
system was supposedly good for years to come. The teacher would settle down with the new directives, usually issued in the form of thick courses of study, and would conscientiously try to follow them until a new expert came along to call them in for revision or replacement.

And so the word *curriculum*, once it was placed in common use, came to mean the prescribed classroom program. It was represented by printed courses of study that set out rather specifically this outline of content by grades and subjects. This curriculum was often developed on a local basis. However, state after state issued through its department of

public instruction a state course of study that was to set the pattern for local school operation.

In time, the leaders attempted to substitute the term *teaching guide* for *course of study*, to de-emphasize the idea that the printed pattern was a directive leaving no place for teacher ingenuity. They likewise attempted to point out that the curriculum was something more than the classroom program of studies. Dictionary makers have not yet caught up with this later proposal.

In spite of its limitations, this curriculum movement has been highly complimentary and helpful to our profession. Its shortcomings cannot detract from its professional sincerity, from the attempt to improve



schools. Perhaps curriculum planning is now past its big-business stage. Perhaps it is past the expert stage, in which something strange or startling had to be handed down to the teacher. Perhaps it is now ready to humble itself on its knees before the classroom teacher.

There now remains the task of placing the classroom teacher in the middle of our growing concern for improved methods of operating our schools. It is time to drop the idea that the term curriculum is a proper noun. There is now the invitation to investigate the term as a common noun, so that it may become something significant and useful to every teacher—an idea that he can do something about, in his or her own classroom.

## *2. The true curriculum of the school is something more than the classroom program.*

When a visitor has asked a school administrator the question, "May I see a copy of your school's curriculum?" the question has usually brought forth printed outlines or statements of the classroom program. School people have found it highly convenient to think of just the classroom offering

when speaking of the curriculum. However, both the practices of the school and the demands of the laymen now make it apparent that education is commonly accepted as calling for something more than the subject program alone. What does the curriculum include?

*3. The curriculum includes all the activities of the children that are carried forward under the direction of the teachers.*

Perhaps about every curriculum course offered on a college campus today would endorse some such statement as the one just given. The idea is not particularly new; it has been found in our professional publications for fifteen years or so. However, it is still a new idea as far as school practice is concerned—especially, high school practice. Every school day of the year, the typical American high school shows in its practices that it endorses two distinct programs, the classroom curriculum and the extra-class program, and that it places the former on a higher plane than the latter. This is indicated by such conditions as these:

1. The pupil cannot participate in such extra-

class activities as football and basketball unless he is passing in the classroom program.

2. Teachers must be trained and licensed in only the classroom program.

3. Little if any time is given in the regular school day for student activities. These are relegated to "after-school" hours which means that only a limited number of the pupils can participate.

4. In the case of most of the activities that are carried on, teachers have to give extra time to them, their classroom program is not lightened, and seldom do they receive extra pay.

5. Only in the classroom program does the student receive credits and units that lead him toward graduation.

6. In spite of the great support and interest that are afforded school activities by the public, if asked to state his theory it is quite possible that the average layman would list student activities as merely the "fun side" of school.

This common practice does not invalidate the ideal represented in the statement that the true curriculum is something more than the classroom program; that



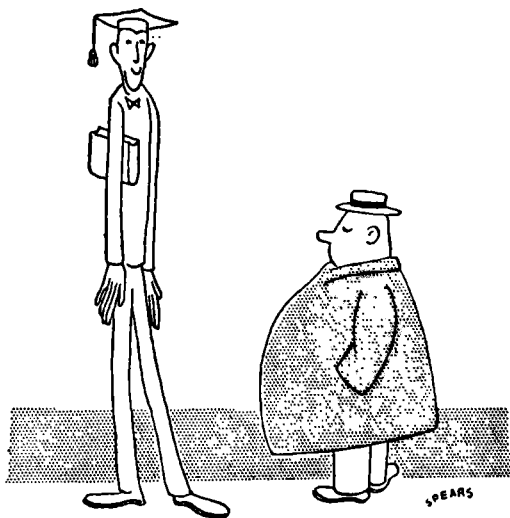
it includes all the activities of the children that are carried forward under the direction of teachers.

A major portion of the high schools that have elaborate programs of clubs, dramatics, sports, student government, journalism, social affairs, assemblies, and whatnot cherish them as an essential part of the school offering. Perhaps the six points enumerated above do not represent the schools' true feeling about the significance of this extra-class program, as much as they represent the difficulty of breaking away from the traditional organization of the high school day.

The flexible nature of the elementary school day has permitted that school to move most readily toward this broader conception of the curriculum. The absence of a school day broken down into departmentalized periods, controlled by bells ringing every hour on the hour for the shifting of classes, has enabled the elementary school to absorb into the regular classroom much of the approach that its older sister, the secondary school, has had to relegate to out-of-class time. The placement of a class of elementary school children with one teacher for most of the school day has given that school an advantage in program flexibility. But regardless of the differences

in their daily schedules, it can be honestly said that both schools have been moving steadily toward an appreciation that the curriculum really includes all the activities through which the teachers influence for the better the lives of their students.

Fundamental to proper social action are good sportsmanship, fair play, self-sacrifice for the social good, group co-operation, unselfishness, and the



THE CURRICULUM—NEITHER AS NARROW AS THE  
CLASSROOM NOR AS BROAD AS LIFE ITSELF

ability to see the other fellow's point of view. These are but a few of the goals of instruction that must be emphasized in school activities in order to be properly established with children and youth.

Then exactly how broad is the curriculum? Those who have said "as broad as life itself" do not give the school enough direction in setting a program. This conception is much too general for practical operation. Those who think the curriculum is nothing more than the classroom program are too restrictive. This conception is far too narrow. School planners who first establish well their goals of education are more likely to find the proper conception of the curriculum.

#### *4. The teacher is an important part of the curriculum.*

The curriculum that looks fine on paper may become meaningless in the hands of a poor teacher, while the one that reveals little promise on paper may be shaped into a thing of beauty by an outstanding teacher.

Curriculum planning some years ago consisted of experts planning something to hand to teachers. It

can't be done that way. Only by including teachers in the planning may the best results be obtained in the classroom. The teacher is too much a part of the curriculum to be denied participation in the determination of changes.

There prevail two general conceptions of the teacher's relationship to the curriculum. In brief, they are:

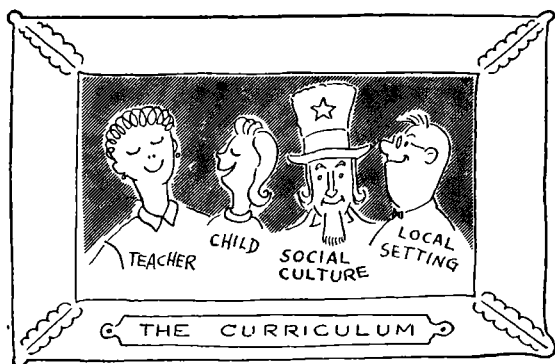
*Conception 1.* The school provides a learning situation for the child. In the situation are the *child*, the *teacher*, and the *curriculum*. Since the curriculum is considered as the classroom program, another factor is added, the *extra-curriculum*. And so the factors in the learning situation are these:

the child,  
the teacher,  
the curriculum, and  
the extra-curriculum

*Conception 2.* The school provides a learning situation for the child. In the situation are the *child*, the *teacher*, the *local or community setting*, and the *social culture*. Out of the unique interaction of these four comes the curriculum; or it might be said that the curriculum reflects the interplay of these four. It looks like this:

the child	}	the curriculum
the teacher		
the local or		
community setting		
the social culture		

The school does the planning of its program, classroom and extra-class, which reflects the local setting as well as the broader cultural setting of American democracy. But this program is conditioned by the particular teacher and the particular child at hand. Consequently, the true curriculum comes out of these factors, rather than being one of them. It



A FAMILY GROUP

is an encompassing thing, with the teacher as a significant part of it.

Somebody once said, "I don't care to choose my subjects in school, I just want to choose my teachers." Although we wouldn't go quite that far, the influence of outstanding teachers upon their pupils can hardly be overstated.

*5. You don't build a curriculum, you provide for it.*

A school administrator who has the opportunity to go in and out of numerous schools during a school year comes to realize that there is an unknown quantity about a good school program that cannot be resolved into a pencil-and-paper formula of objectives, activities, subjects, materials, teachers, and the other component parts of a school. He comes to feel or to sense a fine school program as he goes in and out of classrooms.

A neighboring school in the same school system will not have this feel, although it has the same course of study, the same instructional equipment and materials, teachers with the same background, children of the same general social and economic standing, the same earnestness on the part of the principal, and all

the other individual things one might list as elements of a school situation.

Curriculum planning calls for its extensive and intensive periods of pencil-and-paper planning, in setting purposes and determining means of reaching them, but the curriculum can never be looked upon as something to be mechanically planned and operated. Offerings, periods, committee reports, schedules, and the like can go only a certain distance in reaching the objective of a good school.

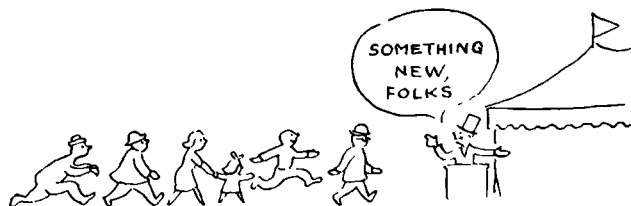
When the building of the curriculum has gone this distance, then the builders must stop and hope that they in turn *have provided for a good curriculum*. The curriculum is a living thing; and it becomes real only after the teachers and children arrive on the spot.

## *6. You can't judge a school's curriculum by the printed statement of it.*

And now perhaps there is little reason to add this point that you can't really judge a school's curriculum by the printed statement of it. This is rather obvious.

One after another, schools make a reputation for

themselves among curriculum planners because of practices that diverge somewhat from the common run of school procedures. For instance, there is the high school that enables its seniors to spend half the day in an out-of-school program of work experience or in one emphasizing community service. There is the junior high school with a carefully planned program of general education at each grade level. There is the primary school that has substituted six reading levels for the two common promotional levels—grades one and two. There is the elementary school that has integrated language activities in grades five and six.



The curriculum that is as unusual as these invariably attracts attention; and the schools in question find themselves obliged to print descriptive statements of their programs. Conscientious as he may be in the attempt, it is difficult for a school administrator to tell the story of a school. It is even



difficult for a visitor to see the program as it actually operates.

The distinguishing qualities of a curriculum are felt or sensed by those who work with it, by the public the school serves, and by the visitor who spends adequate time in the study of the program. Somewhere deeper than the organizational structure of the curriculum is to be found the real kernel of it.

*7. Experience, as an approach to curriculum planning, is meaningless without sound direction.*

It has been many years since the words *experience* and *activity* were added to the teacher's professional vocabulary with the promise that with them would come better things for the classroom. Teachers who worked overtime to bring experiences and activities to their children are now spending more time to determine to what sound ends such procedures are to be directed.

The experience road is not always well marked. It is not always well paved. It is not always the right road. In recent years some danger signals have been erected along this promising highway, and rightly so. They read—

1. All experience is not educative.
2. If the activities of children are to pay educational dividends, they must be properly selected and directed toward worthy goals.
3. For children to be active merely for activity's sake is educationally unsound.
4. Too much activity is overstimulating, as are too many diverse activities. "Too much" and "too many" may likewise be fatiguing or downright boring.

We have all seen the teacher who was so busy having children do things that their breathless jumping from one thing to another seemed to get them nowhere other than to the end of the school day. But at the other extreme we have seen the deadly classroom that was nothing more than a reading and listening room. Classrooms were intended to be workrooms, with that work directed toward sound educational goals.

A shoe store in a third grade may represent little more than activity for activity's sake; or it may represent a well-planned course of action on the teacher's part, leading to better number sense, improved oral language, greater self-assurance in dealing with one's



THERE IS A LOT OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TURNING  
CHILDREN LOOSE IN AN ACTIVITY PROGRAM AND  
LEADING CHILDREN THROUGH ACTIVITIES  
TOWARD WORTHY EDUCATIONAL GOALS

mates, an elementary understanding of community interdependence, facility in written expression, and personal satisfactions of various kinds. The difference depends upon the teacher.

And when such an activity is used properly, it does not crowd out the essential formal work that needs to be done in such areas as arithmetic, reading, and written language. There is a lot of difference between turning children loose in an activity program and leading children through activities toward worthy educational goals such as those listed just above.

One of the most common activity programs found in the junior and senior high schools is student government. The basic principle is that through practice in governing themselves in school situations youth will be better prepared to participate in community government in after-school years. As in the case of the store in the third grade, a student government organization may represent little more than activity for activity's sake, or it may represent a well planned course of action on the teachers' part, leading to such accomplishments as these on the part of the students:

1. A willingness to sacrifice personal pleasures in giving one's time to public office.

2. The desire to place in public office those who seem most qualified to carry out the specific duties of the office.

3. The willingness to compromise differences for the public good.

4. The acceptance of the will of the majority.

5. The recognition of the significance of the minority and the right of the minority to try to become the majority.

6. A recognition that problems threatening the welfare of the group call for study and action.

The difference in the two student governments rests not so much in the students of the two schools but in the educational objectives of the teachers. There is a lot of difference between turning youth loose in the activities of student government and leading youth through student government toward worthy educational goals such as those just listed above.

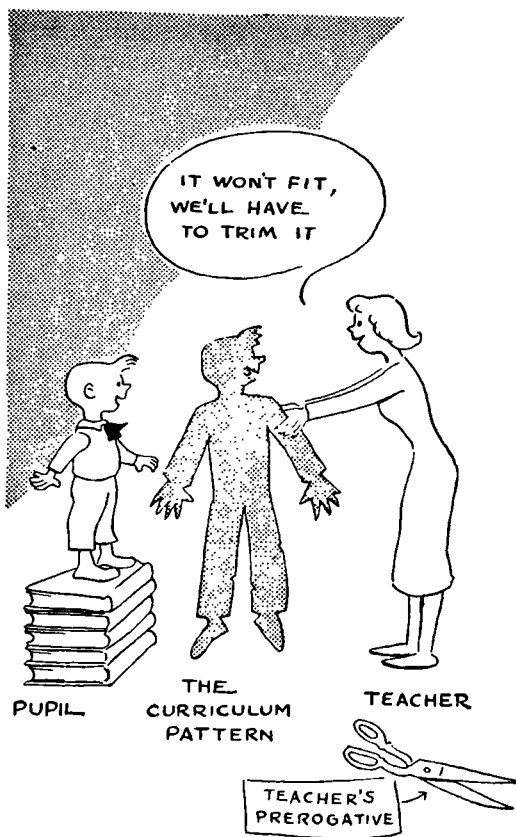
Maybe what we are trying to say is that it isn't activity for activity's sake, but rather, activity for Johnnie's sake that we want. There can be nothing slipshod about the so-called experience curriculum or

activity program. It calls for well selected goals and a carefully planned course of action. And it isn't a curriculum or a program, but rather, only a feature or a part of the total school effort to reach these goals.

There's nothing new, nothing either alarming or sensational, about the idea that children learn through experience. That's as old as life on earth itself. The only learning that can come to a person is the learning that comes through the steps he takes to do something about something. He needs to be told or shown, he needs direction from his elders, but he must do the acting. The practice that one carries on in the activities mentioned above reflects the same psychological truth that makes useful the practice one does in typing or in learning multiplication.

*8. The classroom program must never become completely fixed, for it must always represent a compromise between ideals of teaching and human nature.*

It is not uncommon for teachers to expect more from their classes than those classes can actually produce. When this situation exists, it can usually be



attributed not to unfairness on the teacher's part, but rather, to instructional ideals set beyond the probabilities of human accomplishment.

Once he has discovered a certain level of ability or intelligence in a child, the conscientious teacher can never quite forgive the child for not extending effort and achieving results in accordance with that potential. The differential between what is possible for human beings and what it is probable they will achieve is not always appreciated by the teacher as it is by the philosopher. This failure of experience to dampen the idealism of the teacher speaks well of our profession; but the ideals of teaching must be tempered by reality.

The over-all curriculum pattern that the school sets in advance for the teacher must be fitted closely to human nature. The typical school, which organizes its curriculum vertically by grade levels and horizontally by subject fields, must see that grade expectations are geared to an appreciation of child growth and development, and that they serve children below and above the grade average. The first-grade curriculum that is designed and cut for a child six to seven years of age cannot be used in a school where the first graders are age five and a half to six. The garment would fit loosely and halt the natural progress of the child. The teacher is a slave to a fixed program if a bright child is permitted to accomplish nothing more than the average.



The high school literature course that was fitted to an ante-radio world cannot be expected to fit the average high school youth of the moment. The teacher who has taught for years must to a certain extent change with each new class that comes his way, just as the curriculum must bend a bit with the impact of the new group.

*9. The true value of knowledge studied and skills required is the subsequent use of them by the learner in life situations.*

Rapidly passing out of popularity in educational planning is the thought that knowledge possesses value in itself—that the study of such is an end in itself. Today's school places just as much emphasis upon facts and knowledge as did the school of yesterday, or even more, but the approach to the study is different.

Let us take the case of two sixth-grade teachers handling the study of Latin America. In line with the earlier knowledge-for-itself approach, one teacher follows these steps:

1. Organizes a standard outline by which each country may be studied, such as (1) history, (2) geographical setting, (3) natural resources, (4) imports

and exports, (5) main cities, (6) population, and (7) present life of the people.

2. Assigns the study of the countries one by one in the books supplied for the work.

3. Has maps of the countries drawn by the children.

4. Leads classroom discussions of the material studied.

5. Tests for retention of facts.

The other teacher sees the value of knowledge in terms of use in present-day situations, and approaches the study of Latin America in this manner:

1. Determines the larger appreciations or understandings that might well be established through this study, such as (1) the desirability of the United States' promoting a good-neighbor policy with Latin American countries, (2) the pronounced differences in cultural background of our country and the countries of Central and South America; (3) an appreciation of the major differences among the Pan American countries, and (4) the paralleling of their history with ours.

2. Shares with the class the planning of the bigger goals of the work.

3. Organizes with the class an approach to this work, planning the collecting of books and other printed materials, field trips that might be taken, visits to the school by former residents of the countries, films to be shown, exhibits to be developed, maps and other materials to be made, and so forth.

4. Correlates language work through correspondence carried on between a few class members with children in the countries being studied.

5. Permits the class to have a little fun with a study of the words and expressions of the Spanish and Portuguese languages. As an aid in this, permits the pupils to request from Pan American World Airways some of the simple language booklets they supply their North American passengers who fly to South America.

6. Takes full advantage of Latin American children in the school to bring first-hand experience to the classroom.

7. Correlates music, art, and dancing through the

use of appropriate materials and activities dealing with these arts as practiced in Latin America.

8. During Pan-American Week, presents to the whole school a program that reflects the major goals of the class's study.

9. In summarizing the periods of the year's work, and in examining the pupils' growth, sees that the facts brought out from information gathered and studied are focused upon the broader objectives of the course.

The ten-year-old child today has a much greater amount of ready information than did his grandfather at the same age. The fact that this fund of knowledge is closely related to the life about him reflects good school procedures as well as the stimulation of that life.

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## II. THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE CURRICULUM

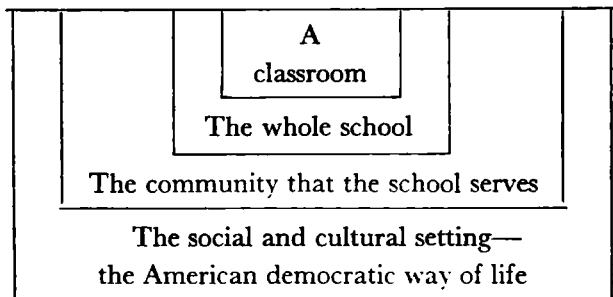
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10. *Any school system is a part of—and consequently reflects—the unique cultural setting of its society.*

Miss Jones is busily engaged in helping her eight-year-olds advance in language and number proficiency and whatnot. She is so occupied in her work that she has little time or inclination to think of the relationship of her classroom to American society in general. She hardly takes time to think of its relationship to the classroom next door.

But no teacher's classroom is a thing apart. No teacher's classroom operates alone. It is a portion of a larger matrix of life. It has its social as well as its administrative connections. A classroom is a





functional part of the whole school; the school is a functional part of the community it serves; and the community is a functional part of the larger social and cultural setting—the American democratic way of life.

It does any teacher good now and then to look up from his work long enough to picture in his own mind these relationships of school and society.

*11. The school finds its true purposes only in its own social and cultural setting.*

If we may judge by their writings and their school programs, not until this century have American educators showed much if any concern about a school program serving the unique nature of American life. A more limited conception of a school

made it natural for earlier American schoolmasters to turn to Germany, France, and other European nations for their instructional procedures.

The conditions of the classroom situation, as well as pedagogical techniques, were borrowed. For instance, the position of the teacher as an unreasonably strict disciplinarian was accepted here as a worthy approach in holding children to the limited school diet offered them. Nineteenth-century American educators didn't stop to think that the strict order of a German schoolroom might have been a reflection of the authoritarian cultural setting of the school. Instead, they mistook this discipline as a technique of teaching, and in transplanting it to our country, divorced it from its true social setting.

In the totalitarian countries, where structure of state was placed above worth of individual, it was no surprise to find the use of authoritarian school methods that ignored individual natures as well as the principles of American life. But not until this century have our schools closed their doors to this dictatorial pattern. The foreign educator who visits our classrooms today is invariably shocked by the friendliness expressed between teacher and pupils, and wonders how anything worthy of being called

education can be accomplished in such an atmosphere. The acceptance of the personality of the child in the home and in the school as something as worthy as that of the adult is an American concept still strange to most foreign countries.

Not until this century did American educators fully realize that any school system reflects the unique cultural setting of its society. In France, where existence was logical and planned, it was no surprise to find a school program that emphasized a belief in a logical training of the mind. Not until this century have our schools divorced themselves of these French concepts.

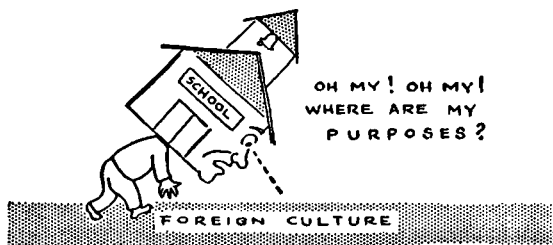
In our country in this century it is not surprising that school teachers have been moving more rapidly toward procedures that capitalize upon individual worth and talent, that emphasize equality of opportunity, that help the individual child to do the best possible to move along to better things in life. That is the natural way of the American school. But in shifting its approach, the good school has not relinquished its goal of good, solid learning. The strict discipline of a curriculum that demands more than is within the possibility of some of the children in the group denies the idea of equality of educational op-



portunity, and thus denies one of the basic principles of American life and of American public education.

And this well fixed curriculum, that demands of some children far less than they are capable of achieving, in turn ignores their individual natures, and thus denies another basic principle of American life—respect for individual worth.

With the growing realization that a school reflects its unique cultural setting comes naturally the realization that it finds its true purposes there. Training for American citizenship is a compelling function of American education. Fundamental skills and knowledges, as taught in the school, aid the individual in assuming his rightful duties of American democratic citizenship, and in receiving the liberties and rights that come with the assumption of those duties.



LOOKING IN THE WRONG PLACE

Although *education for life* may serve as the justification for schools in the world in general, *education for American life* is the unique function of the American public school.

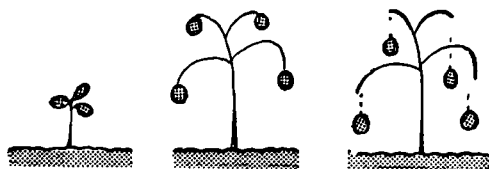
To perform this function, the American public school cannot be restrictive. Its prospective population is all the children of all the people, regardless of color, race, or creed. Its purpose represents America's belief that the greatest promise for her future lies in the development of *every* individual, as far as possible up to the limit of his capabilities, with added emphasis upon his rights and responsibilities in group life of the American give-and-take sort. The school in which the general public makes its investment must follow purposes and practices that promise to make returns to that investment in American democracy.

*12. The school is an integral part of the community life, rather than a training institution set apart from that life.*

The average American citizen is a busy fellow who often forgets to praise the fine work of his schools. However, as shown in his readiness to pay his school

taxes, for the most part he has faith in their work. At times, he even likes to retain a faith in the school that it does not deserve. This is the faith that a school can do something automatic for the child who goes through it, just as long as he subjects himself to its dictates.

According to this conception, the school is a training institution set apart from the give-and-take of community life, a sort of educational reservoir that pipes wonders into a child and lifeblood into a community. This idea of the school enables some laymen and educators alike to glorify a curriculum that emphasizes good books instead of good deeds, one that is far removed from both the life of the community and the lives of boys and girls.



THE SCHOOL CAN SPRING GRACEFULLY FROM THE  
ACTIVE SOIL OF THE COMMUNITY, AND ITS  
FRUITS WILL RETURN TO ENRICH THAT SOIL

If teacher and parent, in the careful direction they give it, permit a school to follow its natural bent, it will spring gracefully from the active soil of the community and its fruits will return to enrich that soil. To the extent that they ignore the nature of either the child or his society, they will secure a poor yield from the school plant.

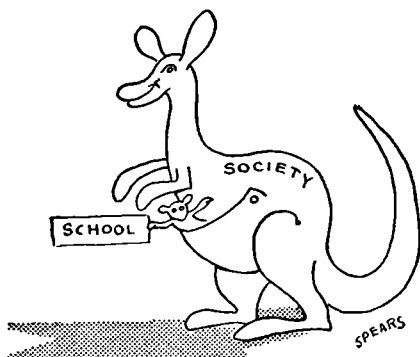
*13. Although the school reflects its society, it still has a responsibility to raise that society to better things.*

Any child reflects his environment, his unique setting. The school takes him where he is but certainly does not accept that position as the point to which he is to be returned upon the completion of its work. In studying and respecting the nature of the child, the school is certainly not "selling out" to that nature.

Since the school's student body reflects its society, so in turn the school reflects that society. And in raising each member of that student body to better things, so in turn the school is raising that society to better things.

In educational circles, in years past, there has

waged quite a controversy regarding the school's responsibility for improving its society. Perhaps, after all, most of such controversy is rather meaningless. The school's job, in accordance with its ideals for better character and behavior in the everyday life, is to move each child as far as possible up to the limit of his capabilities. To the extent that it does this, it improves the society in general.



Perhaps it could be said that this whole drive in education is to bring forth and to perfect the best that is in a person so that he in turn may apply this learning to the betterment of himself and his society. Teaching a child to think is a somewhat hollow objective for the school unless that training has a worthy social purpose. Reading, writing, and similar

school endeavors today are not handled as abstract skills, but are sheathed in content denoting such social objectives as better health, greater safety, and improved citizenship. Schools reflect their society but in turn exert a pressure upon that society.

*14. The effective curriculum is the one that capitalizes upon the everyday lives of the children being served by it.*

For some years now, the primary schools all over the country have endorsed wholeheartedly the psychological truth that learning begins where the child is, that it begins with the known and uses this advantage in the attack upon the unknown. This endorsement is seen in the common acceptance of home, school, and neighborhood as the general bounds of instructional operation in the kindergarten and the first and second grades.

It is needless to develop more fully the point that this curriculum touches the everyday lives of the primary children being served by it. Their common experiences are in the home, the school, and the neighborhood. Upon these experiences the early school builds its program of reading, number work,

science, written and oral expression, health and safety, citizenship, social activities, and so on.

In the second grade, the laying out of the school neighborhood on a well charted plot on the floor brings with it language and number study as well as social concepts in safety, housing, geography, and whatnot. The very action of a child in walking across busy intersections on the way to school is tied into this study program. His feelings about his own home life are linked with his construction of the model of his own home that he places on the plot on the floor.

The program today is in contrast to the unit projects in Indian and Eskimo life that were so popular some years ago. The erection of an Indian tepee in the room and the enactment of Indian life by the children was an attempt of the school to substitute



PUPIL EXPERIENCE



THE CURRICULUM

vicarious experience for actual first-hand experience. In the development of language, social, and number skills, the modern home-school-neighborhood approach has proved to be much more popular with teachers than the dramatization of the life of peoples completely foreign to the children.

The Indian-Eskimo-Dutch period left our primary schools with an appreciation of the values derived by a good teacher in integrating the more formal education around an activity. This feature of the earlier period is still found today in the form of the grocery store, the vegetable market, the fire station, the shoe store, and other such centers of interest in the classrooms.

This movement to relate the curriculum to the everyday lives of the pupils is seen here and there at other grade levels. For instance, the teaching of health from the lower grades on up through the high school reflects this approach. The study of the local community at about the ninth grade is now much more common than the study of ancient history. The American problems course in the twelfth grade frequently emphasizes those problems that tie into the community life. The growing popularity of work experience programs in the high schools and first-



hand community study at all school levels is a bit of this same attempt to keep the curriculum within the bounds of pupil experience, or at least to keep it within calling distance.

The wise teacher who capitalizes upon the things in the everyday life of the pupil may do so to further the study of things more remote. The study of far-away places and long-ago periods may be stimulated if there are apparent some threads relating the study to the here and now. Good teachers of history, literature, and geography have done this most naturally.

*15. The cultural values of education must be set in terms of the culture in which the child lives rather than in terms of the cultures of the past.*

Quite troublesome to school planners has been the job of getting straight what we mean by the cultural values of education. No teacher would deny that the school has a strong obligation to see that its finished product is more cultured than he would have been if he had not gone through the school. But few teachers dare outline what the specific courses are that bring about this result.

Perhaps only by sizing up the cultured person can school planners have any starting point for achieving this purpose in education. Nobody has defined the cultured person to the true satisfaction of others, but as some teachers and administrators have gone into such a task, the writer has picked up from them some such statements as these:

1. The American conception of the cultured person is that he is one who shows a definite refinement in his social behavior.

2. This refinement is reflected by balanced judgment in thought and action.

3. The cultured person sees relationships of cause and effect, or he would not possess and demonstrate this refinement and good judgment.

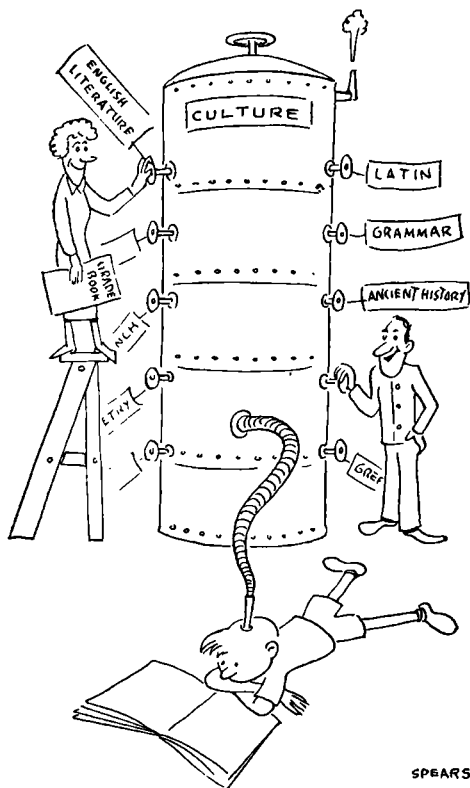
4. He is understanding of his fellow men, of their action.

5. He shows good taste in his recreational endeavors as well as in his vocational.

6. He is not so "highly cultured" that he stands back from the social melee and contemplates it with astonishment or disdain. The truly cultured person is the socially understanding person who is an active

citizen; he shows that he is cultured through his action.

Such a committee of planners will agree, no doubt, that knowledge alone does not bring culture, and that



culture is not demonstrated by merely reciting knowledge. On the other hand, the cultured person reveals a background of knowledge and deep understanding. These views greatly complicate the problem of providing for cultural training in the curriculum. Knowledge, leading to understanding, plays a large part in the process, but it must be a knowledge related to life.

It is pleasant to imagine that with the mere study of the culture of the past will emerge the cultured person. One catch to this simple formula is that the cultured person we are thinking of must live in today's world. A knowledge of the niceties of a French court of an earlier century and of the Athenian political situation of an even earlier period may have certain bearing on the American social scene today, but the educator needs to be careful in staking his claims. *It must be remembered that the American citizen who is to be honored with the title of the cultured person is to achieve that honor because his own social actions mark him as worthy of it.* To answer correctly the abstract questions that come in a college examination or on a radio quiz program is hardly evidence of culture.

There is another weakness in the oversimplified

idea that with the study of the cultures of the past automatically emerges the cultured person of today. It is the implication that memorizing knowledge assures in itself the ability to apply that knowledge in one's social action. The oversimplification of this passive conception of learning is generally recognized today.

And so the school planner comes to the conclusion that the cultural values of education must be set in terms of the culture in which the child lives rather than in terms of the cultures of the past. In his study the past will contribute its rightful portion to the education of the child, but the point of emphasis must be the present setting rather than the past. The person who amasses information without applying it to the improvement of his own life and that of his community can hardly be termed a cultured person.

*16. The conception of education that the local community has is more compelling as a curriculum determinant than the conception of the curriculum that the superintendent brings from the graduate course.*

The history of American education is full of cases

in which the people of the local community have decided that their superintendent of long service had not "kept up," and that they deserved a more modern school than his leadership had provided. The record is full of cases in which the people have decided that the administration had led their schools too far afield from the traditional program. In both extremes, it was not uncommon to find a superintendent packing his brief case and putting on his hat.

The layman's conception of what school should be like reflects heavily his own school experience. The average adult, who has had neither reason nor time to follow closely educational research and school development of the past two or three decades, since teaching is not his profession, is at times shocked when he is confronted with some of the modern approaches to instruction. For instance, reading instruction in the two lower grades, as commonly handled from Maine to California, now bypasses a noticeable portion of the abstract mechanics so common a quarter of a century ago. As organismic psychology edged out atomistic, it was natural for school methods to shift.

The adult who hasn't missed the pink powders so

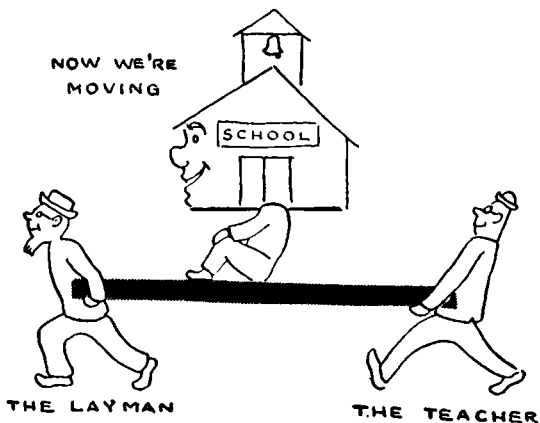
commonly administered by his childhood doctor, or who hasn't questioned the loss of the crank that was on his first Model-T Ford, is still likely to show consternation over the absence of the more abstract mechanics of the language that were once set up as a hurdle for the young child to cross before he could read. And it may be difficult for him to accept the truth that the efficiency of the modern reading program over the one it replaced is just as pronounced as the efficiency of the modern washing machine over the one operated by hand back in 1915.

Many of the more functional courses that have come into the high school the past quarter of a century are at times by-passed merely because the school experience of the student's parents left them no grounds on which to consider these courses as legitimate schooling. There are still many high school youth electing subjects because of the faith of their fathers in those subjects, rather than because of their own possible need of them.

No standard reaction to a given subject can be anticipated by the teacher administering it. A school can give the same set of three or four subjects to a long line of pupils going through the school, and meet with an astounding variety of reactions.

A doctor can give the same medicine to a long line of patients. There may be a common reaction generally noted, but even then, perhaps quite a number of the patients will reveal unique reactions.

Any school administration must appreciate and reckon with the conceptions of education that are grounded in the local community, for these are curriculum determinants. In many American communities, school planning brings the professional and the layman together. This is as it should be. Public confidence in curriculum reorganization cannot come from public indifference to it.



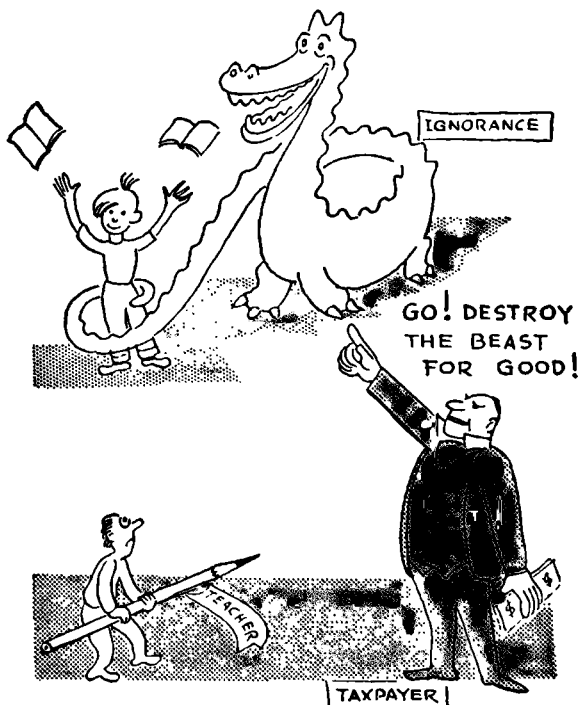


*17. The layman's complaints about the school's accomplishments usually represent too much rather than too little faith in education.*

For some years teaching has been a profession that commands respect because of the quality and quantity of the training. The initial period of four or five years of college training is commonly supplemented by graduate courses while in service. Those who spend these years in a good training program, and then add an ample number of years in thoughtful experience with children, come to appreciate what an individual child is capable of accomplishing through the school's program. The good teacher becomes a real scientist as he senses what to expect in the education of each child—as he strikes a balance between teaching ideals and the nature of the child.

This experienced teacher has had the opportunity to study his expectations in the light of the many children going through his classroom from year to year. To this classroom he has brought from his training period knowledge of important fields such as child growth and development, human nature, teaching techniques, and the subjects themselves.

In contrast, the parent usually lacks experience with many children. As a normal parent, he may have hopes and expectations for his own child that are out of line with reality. This is not to underestimate the possibility of true insight. His lack of



FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

knowledge of the science of teaching may lead him to expect something automatic to happen from instruction in reading, arithmetic, spelling, or whatnot. In fact, his faith in what might be done for his child by the school is often too great.

It is not uncommon for a parent to ask for his child a change of teachers, of methods, or even of schools. He may ask that the child be accelerated or even that he be retarded. Such requests indicate great faith in what schools can accomplish—if only the right method is used, if only the right teacher is used, if only the right school is found. From-public-to-private-to-public-to-private-school is a routine that some parents follow with their children in seeking the school that comes up to their faith in education. In the case of a slow child, it is not uncommon for a parent to hold his child to a schedule of school work at home that is all out of line with possible accomplishments. In the case of an extremely bright child, it is not uncommon for a parent to want him pushed beyond the program suggested by the teachers. The emotional and physical capacities of some children are sorely overtaxed because the parent has recognized mental capacity beyond the average.

In the past quarter of a century, science in educa-

tion has made great strides in the teaching of reading to the primary child. Yet in the case of the child who is not ready to read line for line with his mates of similar age, it is not uncommon for the parent to lay the blame at the door of instructional methods.

Laymen in general reserve the right to throw blanket criticisms at the school by saying, "They can't spell—they can't read—they can't write!" In these very criticisms is buried a great faith in what our schools could do, if only we would use the right methods, use the right teachers, and work more diligently at our jobs. The limitations of education must be accepted, along with the limitations of dentistry, medicine, and engineering. The skill and the sincerity of the top teachers of our profession are a match for the skill and the sincerity of the top people in these other fields.

We in the profession know that not all the teachers are well trained, that not all the teachers are diligent at their task, that not all the methods in use are the best we have discovered, that we must still search for better methods just as the medical profession must. However, there is still the consolation that the good teacher plies his trade with sincere effort and full appreciation of the limitations of methods, as he

applies this effort and these methods to the potentialities and the limitations of human nature.

*18. A curriculum cannot be transplanted successfully, but must be grown from its own native soil.*

The curriculum is a fragile thing. It is not something rigid or mechanical that can be banged around, picked up, and hauled from one school to another. It is a highly sensitive thing made up of such variable ingredients as—

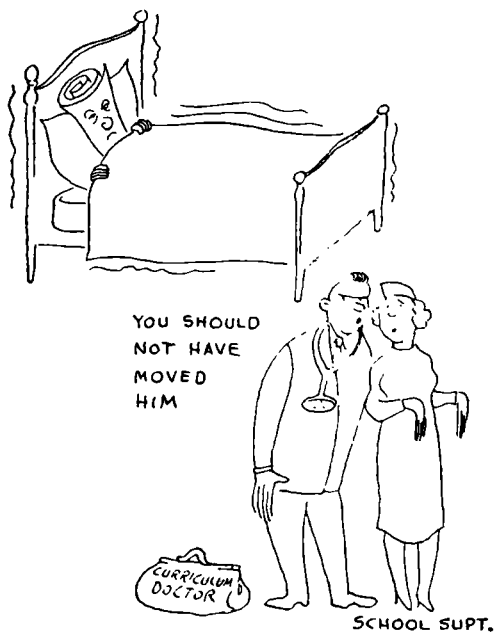
public expectations,  
classroom offerings,  
teachers,  
children,  
school atmosphere,  
and so on.

Over in Central High School the family relationships course attracts attention from all over the state. However, the school administrator who would dare transplant this senior course to his school must not overlook the roots that lead back to such nourishment as community attitude, the training and finesse of the teachers, and the nature of other courses in

the school that may be giving indirect support to this particular offering.

The great success with Latin in an Illinois high school the author was once associated with should never have led neighboring schools to try to serve as

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**BEWARE OF TRANSPLANTING A CURRICULUM**

many pupils in their Latin classes; Solly Thurston's unique instructional touch was the key to the program's success.

In a nearby elementary school is an outstanding library project in a second-grade room. The interest in books and the extensive reading that come out of this miniature library are the envy of visiting teachers. But the one who dares to copy the practices must not underestimate such subtle features of the situation as the personal characteristics of the teacher, the foundation work of the kindergarten and first-grade teachers in the school, the help of the principal, and the nature of the children in this particular group.

One of the most promising roads to classroom improvement is the one that leads through the classrooms of other teachers; but in moving an idea from one spot to another we must always take into consideration the unique ingredients of the two soils. We must extend the promising program that has been tried and tested, but we must not expect exactly the same results in two different situations.

*19. So closely is a single classroom tied into the larger school pattern, a teacher may find that pattern quite restrictive.*

A few years back there was a young, enthusiastic social studies teacher, fresh from college, who so eagerly wanted to establish in her classroom a democratic spirit of work. She wanted to share the direction of the course with the students, to share the planning of the work with them. She wanted the classroom to reflect a pleasant but businesslike atmosphere in which boys and girls felt free to move about and in and out as they followed the natural course of their work in group enterprise or individual research. I, too, wanted these things for her.

But she never accomplished her sincerely democratic purposes. This failure did not reflect her own shortcomings as a teacher, but rather a hidden quality of a school that she was too inexperienced to see: the close relationship of any one classroom to the larger school pattern. Her room was not a thing apart.

In many of their other classes, her students were subjected to a common traditional pattern of schooling that they had long since accepted as "high school." The teachers always decided exactly what the students should learn, and thus made all the assignments. The teachers always assigned seats for the term, thus assuring themselves of classrooms with a minimum of motion. They always judged prog-



ress alone, never sharing with pupils the evaluation of their efforts. They followed without variation the pattern of formal recitations of teacher questions and pupil answers. In other words, the pressure of the larger school situation restricted this beginning teacher in the program that she wanted to develop. It was not administrative decree but a more intangible decree that blocked her desired course of action.

In a graded elementary school, if the course of study sets out quite rigidly the requirements for each year, then the whole school pattern can act as master of a single teacher. For instance, the fourth-grade teacher's expectations in number work may dominate the work of the third-grade teacher beyond that teacher's better judgment. As treated at greater length elsewhere in this book, a graded school calls for standards for grades well punctuated with teacher initiative in making adjustment to the nature of the pupils.



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### III. CURRICULUM STUDY

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20. *Giving teachers the liberty to change the instructional program at will cannot be classified as administrative leadership.*

In recent years much has been said and written against a fixed curriculum. And in accordance, flexibility in the school's offerings and in the scheduling of them has been in the ascendant. However, we must question severely the resulting contention that administration must relinquish close control of the instructional program in favor of teacher will. Administration can hardly slip out of its position of responsibility so easily.

For instance, let us assume that for years the teachers at Centerville have worked under a tight curriculum, in which grade and subject expectations from first grade right on up through the twelfth have been rigidly set. The arithmetic course from second through ninth has been parceled out meticulously by grades, the work at the beginning of the fifth fitting neatly into the work at the end of the fourth, and

so on. In language, from fifth through twelfth, the intricacies of grammar were so divided. History, arranged chronologically through the upper years, was broken only by the pupil moving up the ladder.

All this implied common pupil mastery at each level before moving up, and it all resulted in heavy retardation at the threshold of each new grade. Upon the retirement of Superintendent X, the new Superintendent Y, realizing the inconsistency between this fixed program and the variations among children, and appreciating the misgivings of some of the



**NO ESCAPING THE RESPONSIBILITY**

teachers, announced that individual teachers should take great liberties in making exceptions to the existing program. Some interesting things happened.

The second-grade teacher felt that she should break the lock-step of her program. Consequently, she turned to the first grade to get some materials for the slow, and to the third-grade book shelf in the supply room for some readers for the more talented children. Two children found interest in some fourth-grade readers. Full of the gospel of child growth and development, at the end of the year she passed all the children to the third grade. However, the third-grade teacher, with undying faith in the fixed program of former Superintendent X, immediately pronounced a fourth of her new class not ready for third grade, and was even more nonplussed to find that a few children had already read some of her basic materials. Furthermore, she found her room crowded since she had kept back six of her former class, and had received the complete class from the second grade.

Superintendent Y sat in his office encouraging those teachers who came to propose changes, and placating those who came to heap their misgivings on his desk. Before long, parent after parent was call-

ing upon him to complain of the inconsistency in the treatment of her child as he moved—or failed to move—from one class to another. When Superintendent Z took over the job two years later, he inherited a curriculum hodge-podge that was floating aimlessly on the miscellaneous whims of well-meaning but misguided teachers.

The administrator who gives his faculty the liberty to change the course of the school at will is being good to neither teacher nor child. The responsibility of administrative leadership is not dispatched so simply as that. Effective change never comes through sudden release of controls. It comes from careful study involving teachers and administrator, the latter contributing leadership that gives confidence to the doubting souls and inspiration to the willing.

*21. Curriculum changes may be conceived in the committee room, but their test comes when they see the first light of day in the classroom.*

The conference room has meant much to curriculum change in American schools but at times it seems quite far removed from the actual teaching situation.

At times it is given more credit as a revolutionary force than it deserves. The large city situation or the county situation is an example of the point in question.

It is almost bewildering or overpowering for school administration to conceive of effective curriculum change in a system involving dozens of schools and a thousand or more teachers. Invariably the planning group decides upon the representative system. It is natural, it is the American way of doing things. So it follows that a central curriculum committee is made up of teachers who represent the various schools.

Usually these people are chosen with care as outstanding teachers in their own right. Usually they move quite directly into their task of objective-framing, course-planning, unit-writing, and so on. They are the know-how people who can do such things, for they grasp readily the ideas of leaders, as well as generating an abundance of their own.

Training institutions frequently lend help in instructional improvement to schools in their vicinity. The school of education that attacks curriculum change in the immediate area it serves often follows this plan of the county or city school system. For

instance, a college that would improve citizenship training began its work through a committee with one top-teacher representative from each of eight participating schools that were to benefit eventually by the program.

As a group, we teachers are usually logical in such group planning. We begin with first things first and move in a sequential order on down the line. If it is unit building, we treat objectives, overviews, and activities, and move on down to bibliographies and lists of materials. But we often forget one important thing—the committee room is quite different from the classroom:

1. The children are not there;
  2. only a small core of picked teachers is there;
- and
3. the work turned out is not teaching, it is merely *about* teaching.

Perhaps one caution to sound in this situation is that the classroom must be tied into the committee room as closely as possible from the start, rather than brought in only after a long period of committee work has terminated.



Throughout the period of its work, the central committee can work closely with the classrooms. The committee has at its disposal the questionnaire, which if planned properly can be used as a means of securing teacher judgment as well as teacher understanding on matters arising in committee meeting. It has at its disposal teachers' meetings conducted by the committee to present its work and its questions. Furthermore, there is the possibility of committee members going into the schools and the classrooms during the course of the work, to exchange and test ideas with teachers and principals.

And finally, plans that generate in the committee room should be tried in classrooms during the progress of the study, rather than after the central planning has been completed. The test of any curriculum planning comes in the classroom, not in the conference room.

*22. In reorganizing the program of the school, difficulties must be faced realistically, and mistakes must be admitted graciously.*

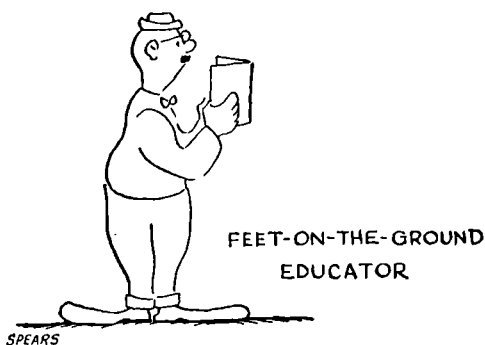
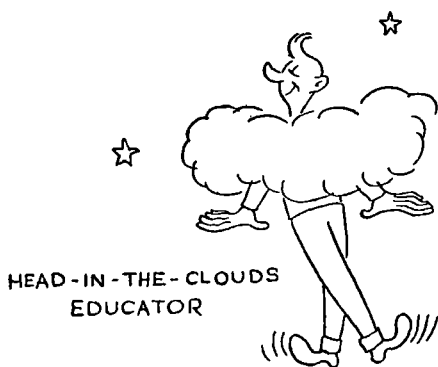
The difficulties of making changes in the school's

way of doing things are not to be underestimated. For instance, it would be easier to retool completely the Ford plant near Detroit, Michigan, than to remove from the high schools of any large city of that state such standard equipment as the typing course, the Carnegie unit and credit system, the gym class, *Silas Marner* and *Hamlet*, or formal workbooks. This is not to say that any of these should be removed, but rather, to indicate their intransitive nature.

It would be simpler to add three inches to the length of women's skirts than it would be to add work experience to each twelfth-grader's program. It would be far simpler to remove cuffs from men's trousers than it would be to take away from American education the Carnegie system of accounting youth's education in units and credits, or the grouping of elementary pupils by grades; or to move the biology course from tenth to twelfth grade.

Yet all of these practices of the school in offering education are educator-made. There is really nothing more sacred about them than about last year's automobile style, dress length, or atomic bomb design, except those that time and research have proven pedagogically infallible. But wise school administra-

tors appreciate how firmly fixed in community soil are the traditional practices of the school. Although the force of school tradition must be measured carefully, it need not deter needed change.



Once a new program is operating in the school, teachers and administrators must be alert to examine its progress and willing to admit its failures. An over-zealous missionary for school change or misguided curriculum committees have at times launched new programs for which both laymen and faculty were not ready. A quiet admission of error and a careful retraction of steps are at such times much more gracious than continuing full steam ahead with a program destined to complete failure.

A well-meaning school administrator once removed all grade titles from the elementary school classes and consequently shortly thereafter removed himself from his position. His faculty committee had become so interested in their study of child growth and development that they had made him believe such titles as first grade and fifth grade prevented teachers from respecting the natural abilities and limitations of children, from serving the differences apparent in any one class. He failed to consider that it was teacher and parent attitude about grades, rather than the titles of such, that was hindering the development of children.

Another well-meaning high school administrator became such a disciple of the idea of greater emphasis

upon general education that his school's curriculum study program resulted in a new half-day course called "Common Learnings." The sudden absence of the old stock labels of English, general mathematics, and general science led community leaders to feel that the school had sold them short. Consequently, the public exercised their prerogative and demanded an accounting. In both of these cases the curriculum reformers were on what they considered to be firm educational ground, but the results marked it as quicksand.

*23. When a school administration launches an experimental course noticeably different from the usual program, it should be launched with full understanding on the part of the patrons.*

In the past there have been some experiments so radically opposed to the usual school program that they turned teachers against each other and parents into bewilderment.

In larger school systems or larger schools, there is always the opportunity to try out new educational developments with a small segment of the pupils and

teachers. For instance, a new general education program in a large school system could be tried in one or two schools, or in a large junior high school with only a small fraction of the entire class. At times large school systems have designated one or two schools as experimental.

In spite of the fact that this is a most cautious approach to school change, it still has its dangerous aspects. Just as soon as some children are placed on a so-called experimental program and their classmates remain on the usual course, there is created the possibility for misunderstanding and even bickering among teachers and also among parents. Needed curriculum experiments—and goodness knows more are needed—do not have to result in misunderstandings. Adequate pre-planning, with all teachers rather than a small group, and with parents as well as faculty—this plus initial program steps within the reach of the pedagogical legs of those teachers doing the stepping, should avoid misunderstandings and assure reasonable working conditions for the program.

*24. Curriculum planning must not become an end in itself.*

Some years back, curriculum reorganization almost

became a big business in itself. The schools were so overrun with curriculum committees it became downright embarrassing for a school administrator to be caught without one. Out of this period came some good work, but so much of it seemed to represent little more than keeping up with the procession. It



almost seemed that the test of a school's curriculum work was the beauty of its organization as set out in diagram form, the beauty of the courses of study as turned off the press, or the number of instructional areas or levels touched by the program.

Needless to say, curriculum planning must not become an end in itself. If a school system has a curriculum office, set up separately from the regular administrative and supervisory offices, the overseer must make sure that it isn't out there threshing alone. As treated at length in other sections of this book, true curriculum development cannot be separated from the program of supervision.

Curriculum planning is a means, not an end. Its goal is sound educational change in the child, effected by the best possible teaching methods and materials. Consequently, that curriculum planning which takes place as close to the child as possible promises to be the most effective.

*25. The curriculum is never fully determined until the children have appeared in the classroom.*

Curriculum offices—curriculum committees—curriculum planning—curriculum guides—all have their



rightful place in a good school system that is on the alert to keep its instructional program up to date.

It is true that the curriculum office sets out to serve the real needs of children, that the committees are made up largely of representative teachers who are experienced in dealing with typical pupils, that the guides which are issued are bound to provide for differentiation of instruction.

So closely must the curriculum be tied into the needs and the natures of the children at hand that it is impossible to conceive a curriculum without doing so in connection with the particular children to be served by it.

But in spite of all the precautions taken in curriculum planning to serve the children in the school under consideration, there remains the fact that the perfect curriculum has never been planned in advance and never will be. The exact nature of the curriculum can never be fully determined until the children have appeared in the classroom.

Those teachers who always need or want close direction will accept the preliminary curriculum planning, be it in printed guide or accepted tradition, and will find little reason to waver from the directive. Those teachers who are too independent in nature to

respect the careful planning of others, or who are otherwise not inclined to study the good in such planning, will ignore as far as possible this preliminary organization of the program.

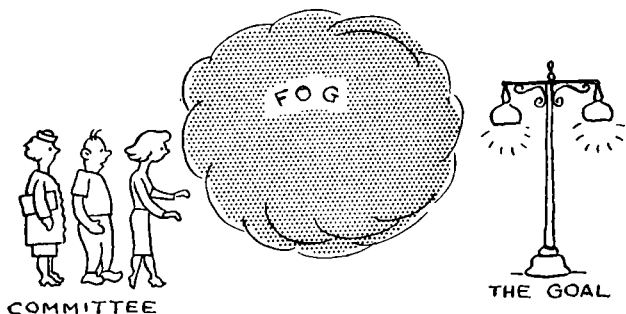
The third group of teachers will take an entirely different approach. It is there in the classroom that the preliminary pattern, no matter how carefully planned, must undergo the working over of the good teacher as he measures it for size and suitability against the children who happen to be there that day. Tomorrow parts of it may not fit, for new children may have come in, and some of those who do remain differ in nature and need from yesterday.

The classroom is more changing each day than the view one receives at the rim of the Grand Canyon, and it is equally as thrilling and inviting for a true teacher.

*26. Many well-meaning curriculum study groups have been delayed and finally lost in the purpose-stating stage of the work.*

It is easier to philosophize about running a good school than it is to carry out the job. This fact tends to keep too many curriculum study groups in the study stage of school change.

When sitting around a conference table, almost any group of teachers planning curriculum revision will logically decide that there are about three steps in the job of school-changing—first, determining the educational objectives or goals of instruction; second, determining the activities, courses, or whatnots that should be provided to enable the pupils to arrive at these goals; and third, putting the program into operation.



Thereupon the committee throws itself into the first stage of the work, the job of stating the objectives. We educators seem to relish this purpose-stating part of our business. It becomes so satisfying in itself. We feel good when as individuals we have established our point with the other committee members. And as a group we feel good when we have made an

airtight case for the new school and have polished and repolished each statement of purpose.

In making this point, the writer speaks from experience on state curriculum committees in Indiana, New Jersey, Illinois, and California, and in working with innumerable local curriculum study groups in school districts in between. His experience in the educational system of Chile gave assurance that purpose-stating is also a popular indoor sport for educators down there.

Stating the purposes of education can be done without coming to grips with such realities of the school situation as the curriculum on hand, the nature of the pupil, the training of the teachers, the materials available, and public opinion. Stating the purposes can be done without determining whether practical steps can be developed for arriving at these goals.

Certainly, any new school plan must include the goals, but curriculum committees must beware of the danger of spending too much time with this part of the work. A more difficult step in the work is that of determining the program itself, and the real test of the second step is the third—putting the program into practice. Many a committee has lost itself in

the philosophical fog of purpose-stating. Children find no educational nourishment in a set of objectives. Regardless of how good a set of objectives is, it will do children no good unless a program of action is effected in the classrooms.

### *27. Curriculum development must respect educational research.*

Graduate schools of education might do well to declare a five-year moratorium on the requirement of research for a doctorate, and substitute the requirement that each candidate demonstrate a knowledge and an application of the findings of educational research already carried out.

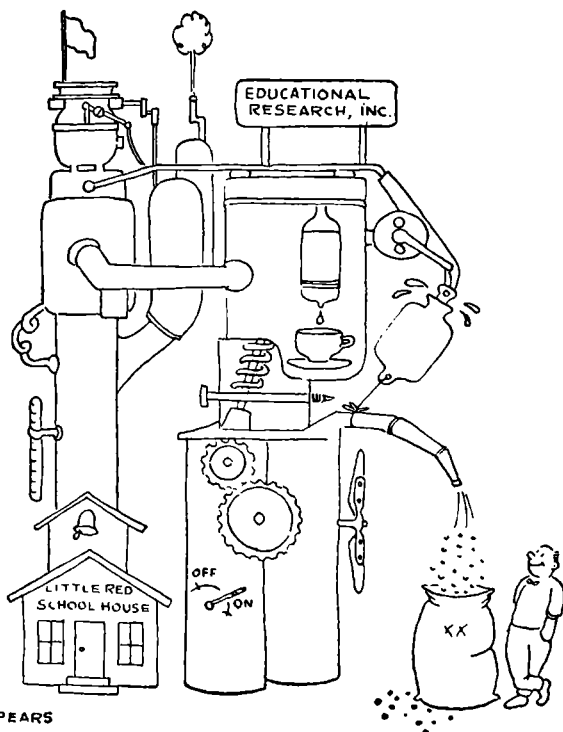
How much of what schools do in their classrooms is done without regard for the research that established conclusively that in the case of things learned, use strengthens and disuse weakens?

How much of the curriculum offered reflects a faith in the theory of automatic transfer of training, long since marked as unrealistic by sound research?

How many teachers follow classroom methods that emphasize the threat for work not done instead of the praise for work accomplished? Psychological

studies many years ago proved the merits of praise rather than blame as an effective approach to teaching.

In spite of the studies that have hoisted practice to a top position as a means of establishing skills, how



many language curriculums still emphasize the study of the mechanics of language as the only royal road to improvement in oral and written expression?

In spite of all the research that has been carried out in respect to proper schoolroom lighting, what percentage of the programs of curriculum reorganization give any consideration to these physical conditions in the rooms where a new deal is proposed for children?

In spite of the heavy evidence amassed to establish the truth that children learn best by doing rather than by being done unto, how many new instructional developments outlaw the passive procedures in favor of the active?

Why haven't the extensive studies made in the field of child growth and development been used to greater advantage in attacking the formalities of grade expectancy so worshipped in our graded system?

Too many educators who rush to the drug counter for the newest discovery of the medical laboratory forget to find out what their own professional laboratories have discovered. Unless curriculum development places educational research in the lead, the

grand procession is apt to wind up at about the same old place it started from.

*28. As the school develops changes in its instructional program, every teacher deserves a feeling of security but not one of complacency.*

Every time a school begins a major instructional house-cleaning, some teachers are bound to feel like running to find security and shelter behind the traditional curriculum structure that is so familiar, and some do. This shelter from progress may be a methodical classroom procedure that has become second nature, or an old course of study, or a basic text that has been used for a long time.

There is no reason why an organized program of curriculum revision should alert teachers to feel that what they are doing is going to be pronounced wrong, or that what is coming is something so strangely new that they will not feel at home with it. Such feelings of insecurity, when brought on by the announcement of a curriculum study program, leave much to be desired in the general morale of the teaching group. And no new program can find the needed nourishment in meager morale.



Curriculum study does not imply that the existing curriculum is a failure or that teachers are doing a poor job. The greater the enthusiasm of teachers in studying the job, the greater the possibility that the job is not a poor one.

There is no reason for curriculum change to imply to a teacher that there is no place for him in the new scheme of things and that he is destined for the pedagog's scrap heap. Curriculum revision implies an in-service study program for teachers through which they themselves arrive at more promising methods and materials of instruction. It does not imply the development of some strange methods or courses by a few master minds, to be foisted upon unsuspecting and unprepared teachers.

Complacency is another thing. It is not cut from the same piece of goods as security or insecurity. Teaching as a profession promises no complacency for a teacher. It owes no teacher security through complacency. Teaching is an on-going business in which there are always better wares to be found and better ways to market them with children and youth. It is not a job to be learned once and for always. It does not enable a teacher to withdraw to his classroom in complacency as though educational research,

study, and controlled experimentation had nothing more to offer him.

A teacher who is continuing to study his job has every right to feel secure, but no teacher has the right to the smug feeling of complacency that dares anyone to find a better way of doing things. The closing of the teacher's mind promises little toward the opening of the child's.

*29. Curriculum revision implies a knowledge of the school's destination, and is useless without that knowledge.*

Curriculum revision means a change in the ways teachers work with children and youth. It is bound to mean a change in materials and methods. It may mean new courses, alterations in the schedules, and evaluation procedures. But behind all this there must be the WHY.

Why do we use these new materials? Why do we do it this way, when yesterday we did it that way? Why do we go to all the trouble of offering these new courses? Why do we have to alter the schedule that we have used so long? Why are we to change the home report card?

There is nothing defensible in change for its own sake. No applause is due the revision program that represents nothing more than changes made in order to keep up with other school systems. A sound program of revision has behind it a sound purpose which justifies all the effort and energy being extended. Here are a few simple examples of curriculum programs carried on under the writer's direction, each of which indicates the ends as well as the means:

1. *Situation*: California school law changed the entrance age for first grade to five years and six months. *The Ends*: To revise the primary-grade program—in methods, materials, and attitudes—to



BEHIND ANY CURRICULUM THERE MUST BE A WHY

serve these younger children. *The Means:* Beginning more formal reading later in the first grade than was the case when first graders were older, adjusting grade expectancy to maturity, emphasizing readiness activities in the first months of first grade, encouraging the first-grade teacher to stay with her class through second and at times third grade, and so forth.

2. *Situation:* The San Francisco course of study calls for the study of San Francisco in the third grade. The teachers have lacked materials of instruction. *The Ends:* To develop instructional materials to facilitate this study. *The Means:* A two-year curriculum study program with teachers, resulting in the development of these materials: six thirty-two-page fully illustrated books for children's use; eight film strips correlated with the books; sets of plastic-covered study prints treating early and modern San Francisco; a transcription of the typical sounds of the city to facilitate language work; and a comprehensive instructional guide for the teachers.

3. *Situation:* A junior high school program patterned after the senior high school. *The Ends:* To work toward a junior high school that represents a

transition school from elementary to senior high school. *The Means:* The gradual development of a program placing the seventh-grade child with one teacher for half the day, this teacher to handle general education courses and assume more responsibility for guidance. This program was tried in two schools with the idea that it could be extended to other grades above as well as to other schools.

Knowing where we want to go, and securing general agreement among the teachers that that is the place we want to go, means a lot to an organized program of curriculum development. If the goal is not accepted, it is foolish to think that the methods worked out to get there will be accepted.

### *30. Curriculum development is a continuous process.*

A curriculum is not developed once and for always. It is not revised once and for always. It is a fluid thing, partly restricted by the over-all pattern in use at the moment, and always varied by the teachers handling the job at the moment. Curriculum revision may have its concentrated periods,

punctuated with special committees and the production of special guides, but curriculum revision is a thing that must continue indefinitely if schools are to keep up with the job asked by society.

In the three cases of curriculum change just cited in the discussion of the previous principle, none represents a program with an exact beginning and an exact termination. The problem of adjusting primary work to the age and maturity of the children being served, and the search for improved materials and methods to facilitate this adjustment, are matters calling for the continued attention of schools.

The problem of making the American junior high school a real transition school calls for study and experimentation from here on out. To its credit the school has its outstanding achievement in developing student activities, but it has far to go in turning its curriculum into one that will serve growing youth as they move from an elementary school to the high school above. The provision of junior high schools in this country came faster than the development of a program of instruction to meet the excellent theory of the school. If the junior high school is to avoid being just another high school, curriculum development at this level must be continuous.

*31. Teachers should receive classroom returns upon their investment of time and energy in committee work.*

It is not surprising if at times teachers enter into a curriculum committee with their fingers crossed. Many curriculum plans, well meaning as were the instigators, never got past the pencil-and-paper stage. Nothing significant happened in the classrooms as a result of the work offered by the planners.



If this happens very often in a school system, the word will get around, and teachers in general will become skeptical of each new curriculum venture.

The curriculum director, the principal, the superintendent, or any other official who undertakes the role of leadership in curriculum reorganization must see that no teacher time is lost in fruitless undertakings. At the end of the work period must be something that can be done in the classrooms, something that promises better classrooms than were there prior to the undertaking. Teachers should expect no less.

*32. A program of curriculum development should bring active participation to as many of the teachers as possible.*

A large city school system set out to improve its science program in the elementary schools. Among the steps taken in the period of curriculum study and development were these:

1. Four good classroom teachers, from various grade levels, were brought into the central office by the curriculum director for one school year, to act as a steering committee.
2. They visited all elementary schools, to observe and discuss science teaching. They hobnobbed with classroom teachers, some of whom stopped in at the central committee room to follow up on references, films, or other teaching aids.



3. The committee listed, and card-catalogued by grade level, the more promising things that teachers were doing over the city in this field. Schools and names were catalogued for later reference.

4. After a few weeks, an after-school science workshop for elementary teachers was opened by the four committee members. It attracted one hundred teachers. This continued two hours a week for some months.

5. Out of the workshop came the idea as well as much of the material for three science teaching guides: (1) Kindergarten and First and Second Grades, (2) Third and Fourth Grades, and (3) Fifth and Sixth Grades.

In between workshop periods the four key teachers continued a daily investigation of science instruction elsewhere and the review of all types of instructional aids. Furthermore, they worked over the workshop output of each meeting and presented it to the next in an organized manner.

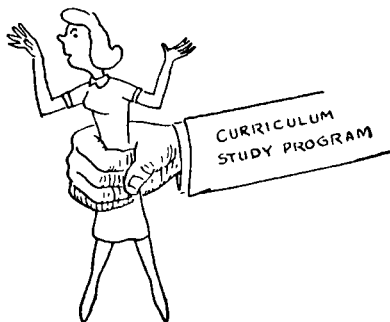
6. At the end of one year the workshop closed. Three teachers returned to their classrooms and one remained for another semester to gather up the loose ends. There were produced the three guides. New lists of books and other instructional aids were set up

and supplied. A standard science kit for each school was developed and equipped.

7. The guides went out into the classrooms. Principals and teachers in each building discussed them and moved somewhat cautiously toward trying some of the activities and the new supplies and materials.

8. Here and there, teachers asked to have a chance to take review courses in science. Another year brought forth two such after-school courses bearing college credit. One was set up for primary teachers, the other for teachers of fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. Both were filled to capacity.

The interest in the program has been continuous, and the active participation of teachers and principals has touched all 85 elementary schools. As



many as a third of the faculty members in a portion of the schools have taken part in some step or other of the work. It can be truthfully said that in this case the new science program came from the classrooms. Central office leadership sparked the movement and co-ordinated the efforts of the many teachers who participated.

A program of curriculum development should bring active participation to as many of the teachers as possible. Such a program need not be a whirlwind affair, but can continue over a period of years.

### *33. There is no substitute for administrative leadership in curriculum development.*

The school principal frequents regional and state educational conferences. It is not uncommon for him to hear a speaker say just the thing that he would like to have his teachers hear—just the thing he thinks they need. If practical, he often asks the speaker to come to his school to give the talk.

Public speakers are poor substitutes for local leadership in matters of instructional improvement. In the first place, this type of “leading” represents

an endorsement of the passive theory of learning. It implies that teacher change comes about merely through telling the teacher what to do.

In the case of children it is generally accepted that they learn by doing something about it themselves, under the stimulating guidance of teacher leadership. And so perhaps it is the same with teachers who would restudy the curriculum. They best do the job by doing something about it themselves, under the stimulating guidance of local leadership.

The local administrator cannot step back out of the picture and expect a consultant from the campus to lead the teachers. That consultant can be used to spark the work here and there, but only if the principal assumes a major share of the responsibility. Curriculum development is a feature of a good supervisory program, and the principal cannot delegate that responsibility.

*34. Curriculum revision must begin with the true purposes of the school's program rather than with the present conception of the school.*

There is little reason for a school faculty to get excited about curriculum reorganization if such re-

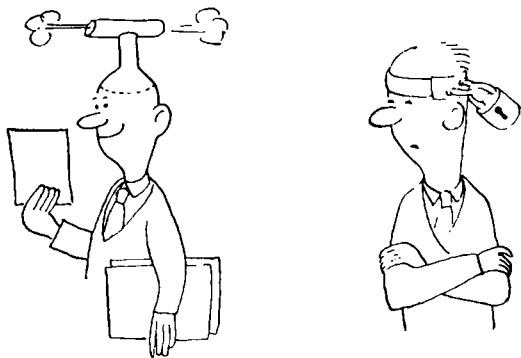
organization is to be limited to some artificial tinkering. Some time ago the English teachers of a large junior high school in the East decided with the principal to do some curriculum reorganization. They professed to desire a modern approach to language study. They thought it would be well to call in a leader from a neighboring school of education so that the work might be set up as an extension course carrying graduate credit.

When the representative of the group approached the college, the dean of education suggested one of his staff as a true leader for this important undertaking. The junior high school turned down this possible leader as well as another later suggested by the dean. They in turn suggested to the dean the professor they wanted, one noted for his traditional approach to the teaching of English. In other words, the teachers in question would have liked to secure the college's help in assuring them that the things they were already doing in their English classrooms were the things that should be continued.

In curriculum revision, it is quite common for a school system or a school staff to organize into present subject-field groups to carry out this study program. That decision in itself represents a major

curriculum decision. It marks the present organization of the curriculum as the starting point for the development of the new curriculum. In undertaking a study program, an open mind promises much more than a closed one.

Only if the study group begins with the school's goals or purposes can it expect to come out with instructional procedures that will carry children toward those goals. Naturally, in any good school many of its present procedures will be retained after this curriculum investigation. But this selection and rejection can be meaningful only if they are guided by worthy purposes of instruction, first established.



THE OPEN MIND AND THE CLOSED MIND

*35. Parents appreciate the opportunity afforded them by the school to be a part of new developments in the classrooms.*

For some time, California has had a state law making five years and six months the entrance age to the first grade of public school. San Francisco teachers and principals took organized steps to revamp for this younger child the first-grade curriculum that had been developed for the six-year-old. This change was effected with the aid of a concentrated effort to change also the public conception of first grade. The successful movement to a new first-grade program was made possible only through this subsequent change of public attitude about first-grade expectancy.

Among the steps taken in interpreting the program of first-grade work to school patrons were these: teachers called parents in to the classrooms to watch the reading-readiness activities and the early reading instruction; principals held meetings of parents to discuss with them the work of the lower grades; and a booklet for the homes was prepared by a competent committee of kindergarten and first-grade teachers.

The American parent cherishes the right to pass

judgment on the work of the school, and is not to be bypassed in curriculum revision. The parent-teacher organization offers an excellent means for community understanding of the school's progress in instructional improvement.

*36. In the continued improvement of the school program, it is not a matter of telling parents and school patrons what we are doing; it is a matter of including them in what we are doing.*

Parent-teacher organizations are commonly accepted today as an integral part of a good school system. The exact determination of their function in the educational scheme of things is not so commonly accepted. It is customary for them to show their interest in the school's needs by raising funds and making such funds available for emergencies not covered by the school budget.

Lunches and supplies for underprivileged pupils, drives for more school revenue, and uniforms and trips for the band are typical of the outlets for the energies of the parent groups. It is likewise common for their meetings to include talks by teachers and school administrators and demonstrations by chil-

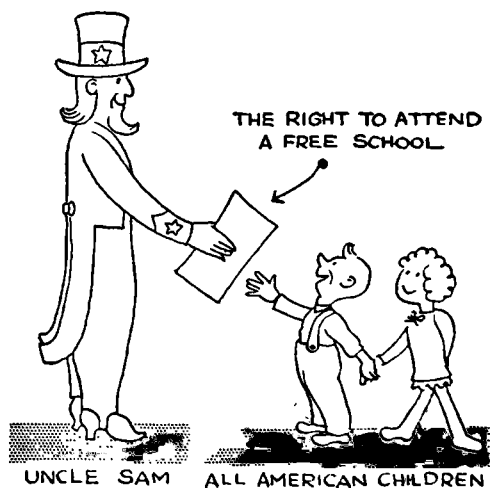


dren, as interpretation of the school's program. In recent years, the larger parent-teacher organization has given birth to parent study groups that may treat in a general way the theories and practices of schools.

However, it is not so common for parents to be included in the specific curriculum study programs of the school. Only when this is effectively done can school administration know that there will be public understanding and acceptance of the changes that come in the program of continued school improvement.

*37. Education is a serious business, but this need not deny its being a pleasant and stimulating business.*

Education is a serious business because it is dealing with the lives of young people on the move. They are going places, important to them as well as to their communities, and they deserve the best of help in their progress. The right to attend a free school must be matched with the right to study the proper program. Every teacher who takes any part in this enterprise needs to take seriously the responsibility.



Taking seriously the job of teaching does not mean jumping at the conclusion that the classroom atmosphere need be that of a sweat-shop. It does not mean conducting a deadly silent classroom in which the children are driven forward as slaves by a teacher who is the sole master of the situation, the teacher in turn being driven forward by a severe pressure of things to be done. When such methods are followed, this pressure felt by the teacher may be generated by uniform school requirements, by public expectations, by the administration, or even by the teacher himself.

One who has worked in many schools, in supervisory or administrative capacity, comes to appreciate the great variation in atmosphere that exists among classrooms. There is the on-the-edge or the fearful atmosphere that at times is apparent. It is represented by the child being afraid to do or act lest he incur the ill will or the disapproval of the teacher. Here the incentive for work is not the true inner satisfaction that should come to a person, but rather the approval of the teacher who acts as the sole judge—the one who knows what is right and wrong. Often this atmosphere is set by the teacher. But if it is apparent in classroom after classroom down the hall, it is apparent that it may emanate from a principal, the teacher being fearful of incurring his disapproval. If it is apparent in school after school in a given system, it apparently reflects central office policy.

Taking education seriously does not call for the sweat-shop kind of procedure just mentioned. Classrooms that reflect the pleasant natures of children and teachers can be the most stimulating for children in their important progress in life. Teachers work better under such conditions, and children accomplish more. A classroom has its justification in the

important work to be carried out there. Even the more meticulous skill building routines that are essential to every school can best be carried out under pleasant conditions. Sound goals of accomplishment are asked in every good school, but working toward those goals is best accomplished when there is a joy in the undertaking reflecting the busy enthusiasm of teacher and children.

*38. No teacher should be saddled with a curriculum that leaves her no recourse but to fail children.*

A curriculum that forces teachers to fail children against the teachers' better judgment is one that is set up with requirements rigidly prescribed in advance. For instance, in the first two grades a child has to reach a given standard in reading accomplishment or he is denied the right to pass into third grade. Or in a high school typing class a student has to reach a certain standard in words typed per minute or he is denied the right to pass to the next typing class. Or in a junior high English class a child has to read a standard number of "outside-reading books" if he is to receive credit for the course.

These three examples, which could be multiplied with instances from all grade levels and all areas of study, represent examples of classroom programs rigidly set in advance of the pupils' entry into the classes. Such uniform procedures deny the teacher the right to use his own discretion in the matter of retaining or promoting children. For a teacher who is inclined to shirk the difficult task of bringing the best from all children, such uniform standards act as a scapegoat. In the case of a failing student, the teacher can rationalize his own failures by pointing to the requirements and saying, "You didn't do the work. There's nothing I can do but fail you."

Who can say that retardation doesn't have its true place in the theoretical scheme of school organization? If used with discretion, it promises to hold its rightful place in educational practice. But surely, in curriculum provision, there should be no all-school master plans that imply that all children are alike and of equal ability, and which thus force teachers against their will to fail children.

*39. Curriculum planning must consider the teacher as well as the classroom offering.*

To make the statement that curriculum planning must consider the teacher as well as the classroom offering is just another way of emphasizing the point that the teacher is the heart of the curriculum. In most school systems this is recognized in such practices as these:

1. Teachers participate in curriculum change.
2. A maximum number of teachers participate in such study programs.
3. New developments that are inaugurated are within the readiness-range of the teachers.
4. Instructional experimentation on the part of individual teachers is encouraged and supervised by the administration.
5. Supervision of instruction has as its focal point the improvement of instruction in the classroom in question rather than the weaknesses of that teacher. The potentialities of the teacher will be realized more readily this way than through direct supervisory attack upon her shortages.
6. Teachers are active in the selection of instructional materials.
7. Curriculum planning is not a telling program

or a handing-down program, with administration on the giving end and teachers on the receiving.

The writer will always remember the eighth-grader who had nothing to contribute in his English class. There were no words worth writing, none to speak before his classmates. He was even short of companions. A wise teacher found his strength to be his manipulative ability in respect to a short-wave radio that he operated at home. An invitation to set up the radio in the classroom was in time accepted. In turn it was the center of attention, and naturally the operator was encompassed in that center. On the proper day there was the half-period explanation by the student of the workings of the short-wave set and the interesting experiences connected with it. Later he wrote the story of it, and then read a number of books on the subject. A less understanding teacher might have packed him off to a special English class.

The primary teacher in America has long since accepted as standard procedure the job of broadening the experiences of the young child as a foundation for the more formal instruction in reading, written language, and number work that is to follow. In these primary classrooms there is for the most part

general acceptance of the wide range in maturity and ability.

*40. Curriculum development must be meaningful and promising to teachers.*

Beginning curriculum revision where the teachers are perhaps means beginning it with the things that seem meaningful to them. It is the responsibility of supervision to determine these things.

Perhaps the most successful curriculum study programs involving teachers are those that seem to have their origin in the problems that teachers face in their classrooms. This is natural, for any teacher is more susceptible to an invitation to restudy his procedures and materials if there is promise of working on problems for which he recognizes he still has inadequate answers.

In general, teachers have been concerned about pupils who were not meeting school expectations in the usual school studies, about maladjusted children, conduct in halls and assemblies, and similar matters reflecting the day-by-day life in the classroom and the building. Although it may be a more worthy undertaking, it may be more difficult to enlist general teacher support of curriculum study based on



broader topics than those just cited. For instance, the following study programs, unless announced with some specific explanation of their magnitude, may leave the great majority of an average faculty disinterested:

1. Reorganizing the program of general education.
2. Improving the program of teaching democratic citizenship in the school.
3. Securing the proper balance between general and vocational education.
4. Reconsidering grade expectancy.

The more specific problems cited earlier as typical of teacher interest all reflect some broader and more intangible aspects of schooling such as these four. It is the task of leadership to bring out such relationships. The everyday problems that teachers recognize in their classrooms and hallways are never going to be solved adequately by merely an exchange of opinions, the vote of the committee members, or the adoption of some hasty conclusions. In fact, the curriculum problem that appears to be the most urgent, such as that of the slow reader or the assembly disorder, may not be the real problem at all—but merely the symptom of the real curriculum problem.

Effective curriculum revision does not result from making snap judgments on aggravating day-by-day problems. It best comes from tracing these problems back to their true family trees, and thus recognizing them in their natural setting.

Curriculum development cannot go forward unless it is meaningful to teachers, but it need not go forward at all unless it is meaningful to the children to be served. It is the job of leadership to bring out the true relationships between so-called school problems and the broader purposes and values of education.

*41. The curriculum must be built from the bottom up, rather than from the top down or in unrelated parts.*

A high school once started curriculum reorganization by organizing all the subject departments for work, and having each start rebuilding alone. Once all had completed their programs, the miscellaneous parts were expected to fit together.

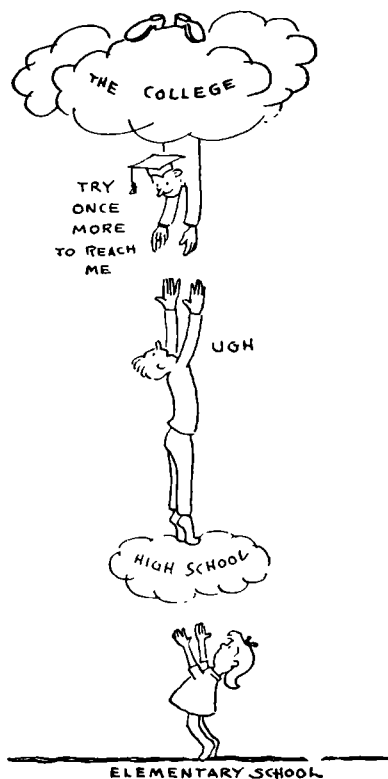
A school once started curriculum study and revision of its citizenship program by reworking the twelfth-grade course. Changes were then supposed to be made at the grade levels below.

A county school system started an elaborate curriculum reorganization by putting all school levels to work at once, but keeping separate the work of the elementary and high school groups. It was assumed that eventually the two new roads would come together and the county superintendent could then step up and drive the golden spike.

Common sense seems to suggest to more and more schools that about the only effective way to rebuild a curriculum is from the bottom up. That way the program for seven-year-olds will fit firmly on the one for six-year-olds, and the one for eight-year-olds will fit firmly on that for seven-year-olds—and on up the line to the place where the junior high school rests gracefully on the elementary school and the high school represents a natural extension of the junior high program.

Too many high schools have built themselves down from the college or from the adult life of the community, and too many elementary schools have taken their direction from the nature of the high schools instead of from the nature of their own children. Thus in this process too many educators have broken their necks as well as their trust with

children as they have looked for the light at some school level above.



WHEN A SCHOOL SYSTEM IS BUILT FROM THE TOP  
DOWN

*42. The satisfactions in a program of school change should not have to await the accomplishment of the ultimate goal.*

Somebody once said that the school should attack its problem of instructional improvement as the general of an army attacks his military objective. He does not move on the entire front at once, but instead pinches off a segment here and one there, successfully holding each pinch until he has gained his entire point. He is satisfied with these consistent smaller successes which in the end will result in the attainment of the larger goal.

A few years ago, school administrators seemed to have the idea that in attacking curriculum revision something fantastic or phenomenal had to be accomplished. Otherwise, there was no reason to begin anything. If the attack was launched and something startling didn't emerge shortly, it was thought that the venture had been a failure.

Educators have much to learn from good generals. The pinch-by-pinch approach has its merits, if each short drive is a consistent part of a larger plan that represents a sound movement toward a better school program. It may take years to effect the total

transition needed, but the feeling of success in the venture need not await the final accomplishment. Each minor accomplishment should bring satisfactions to the school.

43. *Curriculum study as a term is perhaps more expressive than either curriculum revision or curriculum reorganization.*

Some years ago, when a curriculum director or co-ordinator was added to a school system to hold a newly created post, the appointment seemed to bring with it the idea that a lot of changes might be expected in the school program just as soon as possible. It implied that a new broom is supposed to sweep clean. Curriculum reorganization and curriculum revision were commonly used as the terms to express the work under way.

More recently there was a tendency to speak of the program of school adjustment as curriculum development. Perhaps this was an indication of the growing realization that any alterations in instructional practice represent the gradual development of new materials, courses, or procedures.

And today there is apparent a new feeling about

the study and improvement of the instructional program, namely, that it is just that—curriculum study. It is not a renovation, it is not an upheaval, it is not a revolution, it is a sound and steady business of continuous study of what goes on among teachers and pupils in and out of classrooms, with the idea that procedures should be refined and improved wherever possible in keeping with the continuous advancement of the profession.

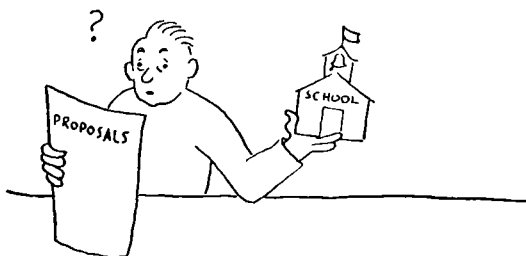
This does not mean that such terms as curriculum reorganization and revision will not continue to have a place. It merely means that they also will imply more of the approach that is meant when one speaks of curriculum study.

*44. A change in the curriculum may be right, but to make it may be wrong.*

This principle might be called the principle of timing. What one school is ready for tomorrow, another may be ready for today, and another may have been ready for yesterday.

The planning of a curriculum must be done in connection with a specific school at a specific time. A curriculum proposal made in a laboratory may be

highly logical and educationally sound, but it must meet this test by being considered for a particular school system.



Being still more specific, what one teacher is ready for tomorrow, another is ready for today, and another was ready for yesterday. A change in the curriculum may be educationally right, but to make it at this time may be administratively wrong.

*45. Curriculum revision must begin where the teachers are, not where some specialist or some other school may be.*

Curriculum reorganization is aimed toward effecting changes in the classrooms, changes in the things teachers do with children in teaching them. It then stands to reason that if these changes are to be exercised by teachers, such teachers must find them



reasonable, acceptable, and within their range of experiences. That is, curriculum revision must begin where the teachers are, just as the children's advancement must begin where the children are.

The specialist or any other foresighted leader has his place in school changes, but it must be remembered that he is not going to be in the classroom to carry on the new program. The teaching job is the teacher's. Taking an exact sounding of the present position of the teaching staff in practice and point of view is one of the wisest things the leadership can do in launching a program of curriculum revision. That's the point from which the new program must be launched.

*46. Curriculum study is closely associated with the school's programs of supervision and in-service training.*

When curriculum officials or curriculum offices were first added to school systems some years back, there was an early tendency to develop curriculum study programs almost entirely separate from the already existing program of the supervision of instruction. In time it became apparent that these two programs had much in common.

1. Both supervision and curriculum development are concerned with the same thing, the improvement of instruction.

2. Both programs seek their goals by working with classroom teachers.

3. Both programs emphasize the development of classroom materials and teachers' guides.

As the idea of the supervision of instruction was broadened to include instructional improvement in general as well as the observation of teachers at work in classrooms, it found itself on the same track with curriculum study. And then came in-service training to join the two.

In-service training is a blanket title given to all activities set up by a school system to enable teachers to develop while on the job. It has found its popularity in many school systems with salary schedules holding the provision that the granting of increments is dependent upon the teacher's continued study on the job.

By the time that in-service work as an idea came in, supervision and curriculum study programs had already moved over to the idea that their most effective approach was through teacher study groups.

Consequently, it was natural for in-service programs to become a part of the new consolidation of supervision and curriculum planning.



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## IV. ADMINISTERING THE CURRICULUM

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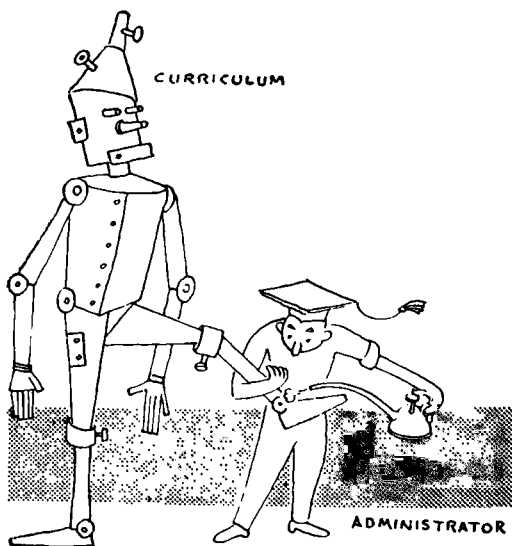
*47. The organization and administration of the curriculum reflect the leadership of the school.*

Upon school administration fall two heavy responsibilities pertaining to the instructional program, one being the organization of the curriculum and the other the administration of it.

It is far easier to carry out the second of these, the administration of the curriculum. It can be done without spending any time or thought on the first. For every school has a curriculum of one sort or another, usually inherited from previous periods of the school's existence. To administer such a generally accepted program is relatively simple. This job can resolve itself into little more than such routine administrative acts as these:

1. replacing books and other materials that are lost or worn out,

2. assigning teachers to the given subjects and classes,
3. assigning pupils to the given subjects and classes,
4. providing adequate classrooms,
5. inducting new teachers into the accepted way of doing things, and
6. helping teachers with problems pertaining to such matters as pupil maladjustment and pupil promotion.



OILING AND POLISHING

In other words, administering the curriculum can very easily become a matter of adjusting pupils and teachers to a general pattern of instruction that has long since been accepted as the only way of providing schooling. Keeping oiled the existing instructional machinery is the main job in this approach to administration.

Some school administrators are not content to limit their work to oiling the existing machinery. As they keep it moving they are also inclined to question the mechanism, with some thought of improvement in the model. Before you know it, such an administrator has called to the side a teacher to discuss the curriculum as they analyze its workings. As they stand there, more teachers stop to see what is going on, and in time they are catching a few hours a week to study the instructional program with the thought of some revision or retooling here and there.

For instance, they may note that the part of the curriculum that treats reading does not include some of the latest improvements that research has developed. They may note that some children come through with limited improvement in reading ability.

Or they may note that the curriculum for elementary education and the curriculum for secondary

education are virtually two separate machines, loosely co-ordinated and driven by motors representing divergent points of view of human development.

School administration must assume both responsibilities, that of curriculum organization as well as that of curriculum administration. There must be a continuous and careful analysis of the school's total program, a thing that will never come if the school heads are not so inclined. Tied to this analysis is the provision for promising changes. To administer the school's program without this approach means little more than perpetuating the status quo without question.

*48. The organization machinery of the school must never get in the way of the educational progress of the learner.*

Every school has its instructional program, part of which is offered in the classroom and part outside. Around this program is built up certain organizational machinery to implement the movement of the children through this program. Typical of the items that can be listed as a part of this are:

1. the marking system,



2. the system of units and credits,
3. the organization of the school day into periods,
4. the system of hall passes,
5. the charts in a room used to check progress in accomplishment in one area or another, and
6. the home report card.

A good teacher or a good administrator soon learns to differentiate carefully between these organizational devices and the real educational activities of the school. Consequently, he appreciates the fact that these devices have their justification not as learning tools or learning activities, but as machinery pure and simple. The marking system, the home report card, the accounting of work taken by units and credits, and the progress charts that hang in a classroom are all recording and accounting procedures.

They are not educational in nature.

They are not goals of instruction.

They promise no growth to children in themselves.

Likewise there is nothing psychologically or pedagogically sacred about any particular system of dividing the school day into periods, system of hall passes, method of providing entrance into the school library, or plan for enabling children to move into the building from the playground.

These are managerial devices pure and simple, but at times the reverence paid them would make us wonder if they have been mistaken as educational or instructional activities. For instance, practices such as the following denote confused thinking of this sort.

1. The third-grade teacher never runs the language activities beyond the language period. Arithmetic follows, and she always begins that work exactly on time regardless of the height of interest in the language work.

2. The high school requires 32 credits of work for graduation, and the principal never permits a student who lacks one-fourth credit of required work to graduate even though he may have as many as a total of 35 or 40 credits.

3. The seventh-grader, during his study period, wishes to check some references in the school library, but he doesn't dare try to enter it because the rush of things that morning prevented his securing a library pass from the teacher of the subject in question.

4. Even though John, in the fourth grade, has made some progress with his problem of self-management, his shortcomings in comparison with the class members who never did have any struggle in behaving themselves are posted weekly on the room's

citizenship chart that bears the names of all the pupils.

5. The teachers of a particular school never give the children a chance to discuss what progress they have made for the grading period. The marks are always determined by the teachers alone, and at times come as surprises to the children.

Schools have to be organized and managed, and such organization and management is bound to call for reports, records, schedules, and similar managerial devices. But at all times these things should take the side track and give the right-of-way to those activities marked as educational.

*49. The ideal curriculum is one that is neither too rigid nor too flexible.*

Not so many years ago, a curriculum worker came up with a nugget that he termed the child-centered school, and then most of the other curriculum planners dropped whatever they were engaged in at the moment and rushed to the new gold fields. It was a popular movement, for many educators were ready to escape from the tight grip of a subject-centered or teacher-dominated school. The followers of the

new movement searched hard and long for the child-centered school, with varying degrees of success.

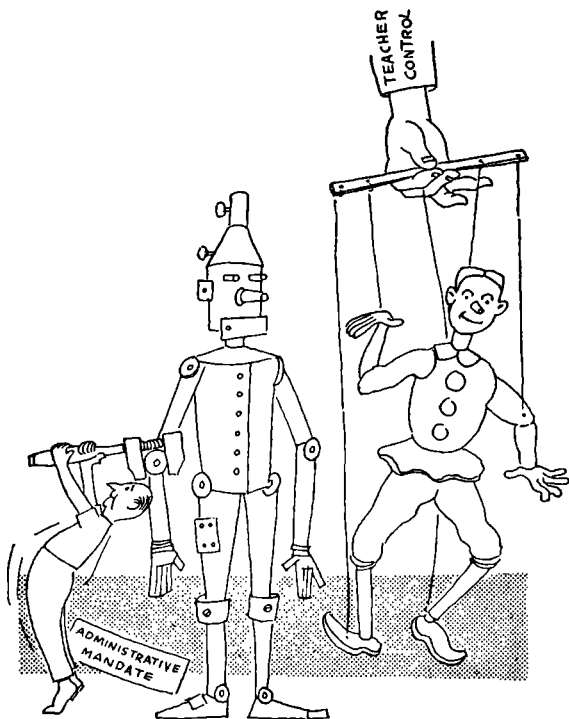
So earnest were the seekers, they often threw pre-planning and teacher direction to the wind, as they centered attention upon the learner and his inclinations. As they searched, they scattered themselves all along the way between the rigid school they had left and the extremely flexible school they were seeking. Perhaps the good school is somewhere between the two extremes.

The static curriculum, tightly set and rigidly administered, represents the faith of adults in their ability to determine completely in advance a school program good for all. It makes little compromise with human nature.

The ultra-flexible curriculum, loosely set and loosely administered, represents the willingness of school administrators and teachers to leave most of the curriculum planning to the teacher after the children arrive, the teacher in turn to follow children's inclinations as they appear at the moment.

Certainly neither of these extremes promises the child the program that will enable him to advance to the fullest in accordance with his nature. Neither promises American society the perpetuation of its

culture that is needed. There must be plenty of pre-planning in school operation, and the more there is the more modest will be the planners in the pres-



WANTED—A CURRICULUM NEITHER TOO RIGID NOR  
TOO FLEXIBLE

ence of child nature. This framework will respect sound purposes of American education and the scientific knowledge about children in general. Within this general framework of the curriculum, determined in advance of teaching, teachers will have proper latitude to initiate and to curtail as they pay deep respect to the differences among their learners. Teacher-pupil planning will not mean planning from scratch, but rather, planning within the general framework that gives sound direction to the work.

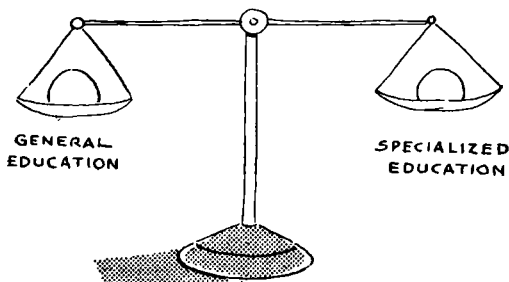
*50. The school provides for both general education and specialized education.*

In providing the curriculum, school leaders need to make sure that the program is properly balanced between general education and specialized education. As stated elsewhere in this book, the general is that which serves all children, and the specialized is that part which cares for the differences among them.

The total elementary school program is usually considered general education, as indicated by the fact that all children are asked to take the same things. However, in the good elementary school,

there is still apparent the touch of specialized education, as the classroom teacher varies the activities of the children to serve their unique natures. The respect commonly paid to special interest and talent in art and music is evidence of this. Even when the teacher recognizes that some children in the room by nature require more quiet activities than others this in a sense is the provision of specialized education.

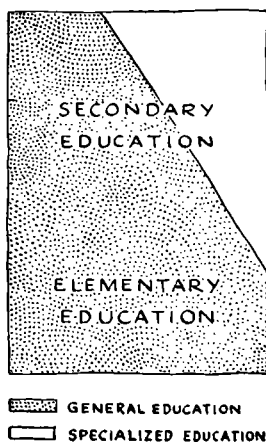
The diagram on page 130 indicates the balance of general and specialized education that is commonly thought of in the organization of the school curriculum from bottom to top. As the child advances through school, more and more varied become the things that he can take. Since our junior and



A PROPER BALANCE

senior high schools follow the elective plan, this same thing might be said this way—the farther the child advances through the school, the greater becomes the percentage of his whole program that he can select.

### THE CURRICULUM



51. *General education and vocational education are component parts of the curriculum rather than separate curriculums.*

In going through school, the pupil receives both general and specialized education, the one rounding



out the other into a balanced program. Vocational education is a part of the specialized program.

The pupil who elects orchestra is taking it as a part of his specialized program, for it means something to him and nothing to many of his classmates. If he is so talented and interested in music that he hopes to follow it as a vocation, then his orchestra course may be considered just as much a vocational course as is the machine shop work being taken by a fellow student.

Secondary education does not call for a dual program, with general and vocational education looked upon as separate and distinct fields. The general program is to prepare a person for his everyday community affairs, which he has in common with all his mates. But this adjustment to civic life can never be properly effected unless a proper occupational adjustment can be made. Therefore, choosing and educating for a vocation becomes a component part of the curriculum, and it means that the school program of the high school or college student is not a balanced one unless it makes room for both general and vocational education.

This idea is quite different from the old one that pushed some children toward academic work and

others toward shop work, thus implying that the mentally competent could study books and receive a general education while those less inclined to study would be sent to the shops for vocational education.

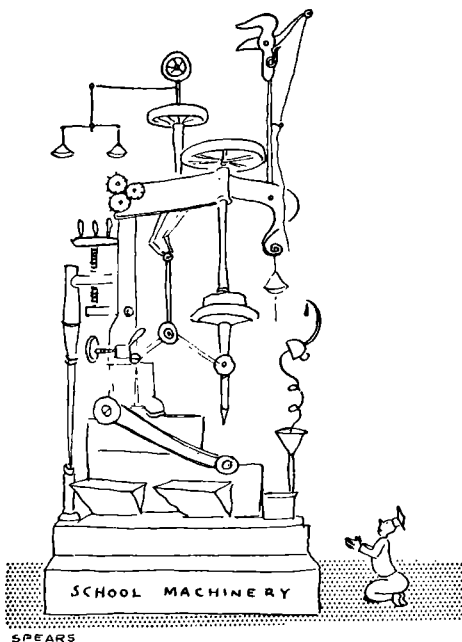
Where does the provision for vocational education fit into the school program? When a child reaches the junior high grades he should have ample opportunity to explore his own talents and interests. This calls for miscellaneous exploratory courses. When he reaches the senior high grades he should have ample opportunity to explore occupations, thus giving him a chance to check his talents and interests against skills and abilities asked for in this and that occupational area.

*52. In the vertical organization of the school system, it is not the type of unit divisions that makes the great difference, it is what is done in these divisions.*

A public school system sees its curriculum as one related program, progressing from kindergarten on through the elementary and secondary school grades, with ramifications to suit the differences in the natures of those being served. It has been common to picture this organization of the school system as a

vertical arrangement of grades extending upward from the child's beginning year in school. Likewise it has been common to break this educational sequence into different schools.

The earliest common plan was the 8-4 plan, offering an elementary school program of eight years



TO BE USED, NOT TO BE WORSHIPED

in one school and a high school program of four in another. Some schools scaled the sequence down to a 7-4 plan. Beginning the latter part of the last century and extending on into the early years of this, there was advocated by Charles Eliot of Harvard and other college enthusiasts the extension downward of secondary education, and the consequent telescoping of elementary education. Thus beginning as a promise of better training for college, with other purposes added later, by the 1910-1920 decade, there emerged into full bloom the 6-6 and the 6-3-3 plans of breaking the 12-year sequence of schooling. Since then there has been constant controversy over the merits of the 6-6 and the 6-3-3 plans as opposed to the 8-4. It has not been uncommon for laymen to take sides in the matter.

Then it became common to extend the public school downward to include a year of kindergarten, and California at least has long since accepted grades 13 and 14 as a legitimate extension of the free public school. These protrusions in either direction have brought with them various other schemes for breaking up the total sequence of schooling. The 6-4-4 plan, although not often used, has its strong advocates. With new building programs, as in San

Francisco, there is emerging a so-called home-school unit, that segregates kindergarten and primary children into small schools close to their own homes.

Nothing automatic is going to happen in a school system, just because in unit organization it follows a particular plan,—8-4, 6-3-3, 6-6, 6-4-4, 5-4-4, or whatnot. It is what is done within a unit that makes the difference. Given a far-sighted leader, a corps of good teachers, and good public support, it won't matter much which plan of organization has been adopted. Given a complacent leader, a staff of mediocre teachers, and an indifferent public, no system—regardless of how fancy it is—would bring a good curriculum to the children.

*53. School subjects are means to learning, rather than disciplines in themselves.*

Some years ago, both educators and laymen seemed to believe that mental power was something a student could develop merely by subjecting his mind to a routine training through difficult school tasks. Latin, geometry, and similar so-called hard subjects gained a reputation as mind trainers—through which the student strengthened his reasoning or memory in preparation for facing later-life

problems, such as getting married, figuring income tax returns, driving an automobile sensibly, and locating a job.

This faith in hidden values in school subjects and teacher tasks persisted over the years until experimental psychology exposed this doctrine of mental discipline, and revealed as scientifically unacceptable a strict interpretation of transfer of training. Practice in a specific field of endeavor results primarily in facility in that field alone, the transfer to other activities usually being slight or negligible.

If a high school wishes to prepare its seventeen-year-olds for a reasoned married life, it does not subject them to abstract, unrelated studies to develop the reasoning faculties of the mind. Instead it gives them studies that pertain to marriage and family relationships. If it wishes to prepare youth for the mathematics of taxation, it treats the mathematics of taxation rather than giving them a course in geometry or trigonometry. If it wishes to establish an appreciation of the American heritage, it gives a course in the American heritage. The means must bear direct relationship to the ends.

Teachers' interest in intensive effort on the part of pupils was certainly not relinquished with the exposure of these doctrines of mental discipline and

transfer of training. Instead, it is found that there is more work done in today's classrooms because it is motivated by something much more meaningful to the child than a teacher's directive of "do it because it's good for you."

The problem in teaching will always be one of determining clearly what it is we are trying to accomplish with the children at hand. Once the goals of instruction are well in mind, then we are in a position to study two things: (1) how capable are these children of achieving those goals, and (2) what are the most promising means of getting them to those goals. This approach is much more sensible than clutching at so-called hard subjects as bromides good for all the pupils, regardless of their nature or their destination. In other words, school teaching has become a science that leaves no place for the quackery practiced in former years. Teaching calls for hard work rather than wishful thinking.

*54. The school's first duty is to the child and the social purpose of the school, and not to any grade, subject, standard, or other device used by educators as an aid in organizing the school for educational purposes.*

At times it is well for a teacher to recall how schools began. There were the young to be brought into the ways of the society and it was appreciated that all the education needed could not be left to the family circle. It was natural for community leaders to think of bringing children together in groups to be taught some of the skills and knowledges that were apparently needed by all of them. As these children were gathered together for this purpose, in the beginning there were no organizational devices carried over from a previous experience of school operation. Yet, education went forward.

It is interesting to wonder what stands out in a school situation today as a teacher opens the year with a new group of children. Is it the fact that they are assigned to her for English 3, or for third grade work? Is it the fact that the course of study indicates they are all to be taught the division of fractions or the mechanics of the complex sentence? Is it the rating scale that is used uniformly in the school for marking pupil progress? Is it the fact that each youth in the group must make two credits in this subject if he is to be passed on to the next grade?



Is it the scores indicating reading ability or general intelligence that come to the teacher for each pupil on his cumulative record card? Is it the fact that there is a uniform daily schedule that the teacher must remember to be governed by as the children become interested in this or that? *Or* is it the worthy purposes of education that are hidden somewhere inside all this organizational and mechanical paraphernalia that has been built up over the years as preferred school practice?

The school's first duty is to these purposes, the service to child and to society, and not to any of the technical aspects of school operation. Yes, the teacher wants to use the test scores that have been gathered for this class, but they are significant only to the extent that they help him to educate the group better. He wants to be guided by the course of study for the year, but he will never hesitate to place the child first when he sees the two are incompatible. The machinery of school operation is to be used rather than to be worshiped.

55. *The right child in the right class is the first law of curriculum administration.*

Regardless of how much thought and effort have gone into planning a good curriculum, it can be easily wasted if the wrong child is placed in contact with the wrong part of it. The right child in the right class is the first law of curriculum administration.

It is relatively easy to violate this law. Much of the curriculum planning that is done in the schools is done somewhat removed from the local school. For instance, a state department of public instruction, with the aid of some key people over the state, develops a new program for this or that. A large city system, with the aid of a committee of teachers chosen from the city's classrooms, develops a new teaching guide for this or that. A county, by means of representatives from many schools, does the same.

It is still left to the administration of each local school to determine the relationship of the different children of that school to the new curriculum. As the curriculum is apportioned among the grades of the school, or as it is set up as classes of this and classes of that, to the administration falls the heavy responsibility of apportioning children to grades and classes in accordance with promising adjustment in learning.

The typical school today chooses to call this apportionment of children among classes part of its guidance program. The task is worthy of careful attention. In a large elementary school, where there are a number of classes of the same grade level, adjustments from class to class are readily made. In the high school, where there are so many elective subjects, the opportunities for sound guidance are abundant. But regardless of size of school or level of it, the right child in the right class is a sound educational mandate.

*56. Before branding a child as immature or slow, the school first needs to make sure that the work is geared to his nature.*

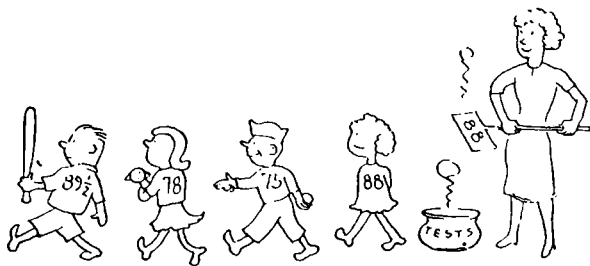
The administration, working hard at the task of getting the right child in the right class, does not relieve the teacher of making maximum curriculum adjustments within the class itself.

In the system of elective subjects, operated in the typical American secondary school, it behooves the school to do everything possible to match elective subjects with pupil nature. Some children will be out of place in an elective music course, just as others will be out of place in a solid geometry class.

Some will have little reason to be in a French class, just as others will have little reason to be in a business-machines class. In the case of many electives, because of their specialized nature, if a poor job is done in the original guidance given the pupils with their electives, then often there is little the teacher can do about it.

However, the high school requires many subjects of all students. These are therefore in the area of general education—representing the work that all are needing, the work through which all can profit. Such subjects include all the required English, the required community civics and American problems courses, the required United States history course, the required physical education, and any other, such as a course in science and one in mathematics.

In all such instances of required courses the teacher has no reason to say that the student is too



slow or too immature. The justification behind the course is that the pupil needs it. Consequently, adjustment needs to be made in terms of his nature.

In the elementary school, all the work is set out as general education. This, in turn, means that the teacher must be alert to see that the work in any area is in keeping with the nature of the pupil. What the child can be expected to do is as important for the teacher to know as is what the school expects him to do. Too often it has been found easier to brand children as slow than it was to adjust the classroom program to pupil needs.

*57. In meeting the educational needs of children, schools would do well to follow the medical practice of diagnosing the case before prescribing the treatment.*

Educational research has done much this century to bring to teachers the idea that the child as well as



the curriculum must be studied as student programs are set. For instance, any elementary teacher or curriculum planning group can turn to authoritative studies that deal with the characteristics of five-year-olds, six-year-olds, seven-year-olds, and so on. There has been little valuable research in respect to the characteristics and needs of junior-and-senior-high-school age children, which makes it all the more necessary for local schools to make up for this lack of information.

It is commonly accepted that the American elementary school during the past twenty-five years has made great strides in developing a program in keeping with the characteristics of the age children it serves. This progress no doubt reflects the advancement in research in this area. It is likewise commonly accepted that during this period the high school has been slow to develop a program that serves all pupils in its age group. This slowness no doubt reflects to a degree the absence of research in this area.

Any local school system can gain a lot from the experience of the medical profession—that it pays to diagnose the case before prescribing the treatment. If we are lacking in our general knowledge of six-

teen-year-olds, for instance, certainly it behooves the local administration to set up a system of becoming well acquainted with such a youth in improving a program for him. The day is past when we can prescribe a standard list of classics for all sixteen-year-olds to read, a standard set of problems for them to work, a standard list of words for them to spell, a standard set of hurdles for all of them to jump, and so on. To do so means to place the entire class on a uniform production line, and then to pull off for case studies those who fail to make the turns as called by the inspectors. Likewise, it means holding back to a mediocre performance those who can work far ahead of these uniform requirements.

The ideal of good guidance is reaching for the approach of the medical profession, that of first knowing well those to be served, and then prescribing in terms of their unique natures. To achieve this ideal calls for intensive study of both the child and the curriculum, with resulting alterations in the latter. We trust that with a proper program, desirable changes and growth in the pupils are more likely to result. The task is most worthy, but likewise most difficult.

This respect for the natures of those being taught

need not deter the teacher from her devotion to society's general purposes for the school. Respect for society's standards for the school is not in conflict with respect for the unique nature of a child traveling up the hill toward those standards.

*58. Unless the school guards against it, evaluation can become evaluation of the pupil's worth rather than of his progress.*

The American school has had in it too much of the tendency to sort children into "worth" groups. "This is our best group," and "this is our poorest group" are typical of statements all too common with teachers and principals. As the supervisor steps into the room, the principal may say, "that is her slow group," just as though an apology need be made for the teacher's failure to secure better performance from the group receiving her attention at the moment.

Sorting children by ability for instructional purposes is nothing strange in either elementary or secondary schools. In the larger high schools providing many classes of one subject, and the larger elementary schools supporting many classes of the same grade level, grouping by ability has been com-



mon. But with it has come the inevitable failure of teachers to restrict their thoughts to the instructional advantages gained. Instead, too often they have gone beyond this to think in terms of the worth of the groups. "This is our best group," and "this is our average group," and "this is our poorest group" came out naturally as the groups were discussed.

Schools are not showcases calling for value tags on the children, rating their worth on the basis of intelligence, performance, or achievement. Branding children by intelligence is educationally unsound. Any evaluation made of the child should be restricted to the evaluation of his progress in performance. How he is getting along is much more significant in evaluation than is a fixed value judgment of him as a student.

*59. Most children who seem "below-normal" or "above-normal" do so only because they are matched against a graded system of schooling.*

School teachers have gotten into the habit of speaking glibly of "below-normal" and "above-normal" children, thus implying that there is a fixed spot that we can look to as "normal." If there is

such an average position, how was it determined? By intelligence, by performance, by curriculum expectation, or by what?

At one time in the testing movement there was a tendency for school administrators to look upon an intelligence quotient of about one hundred and five or ten as a dividing point between those children who might be expected to succeed in the more academic areas of study and those who might be expected to have some difficulty with such studies. Thus the development of intelligence tests may have contributed to this tendency of school people to think of an average pupil.

In addition, there came the development of the silent reading tests and the computation of norms by grade levels. Once a child has been given a standard reading test, with a bit of mathematical manipulation the teacher can find a score that is supposed to indicate at what grade level he is reading. Under this system, if he took the test the third month of the fourth grade he might be expected to stand at 4.3. If he rates 3.3, the teacher may think he is a year "below-normal," and if he rates 5.3, he may be classified as a year "above-normal."

In other words, what we are saying about the

testing movement is that the more instruments we developed, the more we were led to think that by their use we could place children on a scale denoting points of ability or achievement from very low to very high.

But perhaps the thing that has most encouraged teachers to place their children on a scale going both up and down from normal, is the practice of setting up the school curriculum by grades. There is a fourth-grade reader, a fourth-grade arithmetic, a fourth-grade spelling list, a fourth-grade language program, and so on. The children that can handle this work in an average manner may come to seem to the teacher to be the "normal" children, and those who have difficulty—the "below-normal," and those who go beyond it—the "above-normal." Parents follow this thinking also. Yesterday two mothers were in my office worrying about their fourth-grade children, saying they would soon be passed on to the fifth grade but were not ready for it.

Schools have to be organized into smaller groups for instruction, whether by subjects and grades or by some other scheme. The subject-and-grade plan promises to remain with us. However, school administrators and teachers must fight against the

tendency for a grade or a particular subject to mark a fixed point of learning. Normal fourth-graders are nine-year-olds. To think that all nine-year-olds can—or should be expected to—perform satisfactorily in the same reading or arithmetic program is foolish. If we want to think of performance by grades, it is highly normal for some fourth-grade children to read on the level of the average second-grader, and for some to read on the level of the average fifth-grader. If this is normal performance for these children, then certainly there is little reason for us to think of them as “below-normal” or “above-normal” children. A group of normal fourth-graders may vary greatly in any characteristic or ability we wish to consider,—reading, singing, jumping, swimming, arithmetic, or whatnot. Experienced teachers know this; good teachers respect it.

The high school teacher who receives a class from the grade or the school below needs to appreciate this wide range of ability and accomplishment as the normal thing to expect. Wouldn't it be an abnormal school world if all the entering ninth-graders read at the same level of ability and interest, swam at the same speed, and sang with the same success?

60. *The greater the percentage of failing marks in a class, the more fixed is its curriculum.*

The school that firmly fixes the curriculum at each grade and subject level does so with the idea that each child must reach such achievement of performance before moving on to the next grade or next subject. Consequently, the more fixed the curriculum, the greater the percentage of failures, and the heavier the retardation. Regardless of how good the teacher, or how well the curriculum is prepared in advance, there is a wide difference in human nature that can be resolved neither by teaching techniques nor by instructional standards—nor by parental hope.

The provision of flexibility in the work at each grade and subject level does not call for the neglect of instructional standards. Rather, it is a recognition that instructional standards are truly standards only if they are set in relation to the natures of the children being served, as well as in relation to the purposes of the school program. As a school plans in advance a curriculum for a grade, such as sixth grade, it does so with general knowledge of the

ability and maturity of a typical group of sixth-graders of that community. However, the flexible features are incorporated to give the teacher the chance to use his own ingenuity in serving the children who actually compose the class.

Thus, for the school administration to share with a teacher the job of setting standards of instruction means that the teacher must assume that responsibility. After all, it is a matter of sharing standards of attainment, and not a matter of eliminating standards. To permit a child to work and achieve on a level below his ability is as wrong as it is to demand accomplishment beyond his reach.

*61. The school program must not emphasize the child's weaknesses and shortcomings to the extent that it neglects his strengths and virtues.*

Confucius is supposed to have said that a man of noble mind tries to better the good and not the bad in others. There is a message here for the teacher or the curriculum planner who wants to do right by the pupil.

Certainly teaching is a noble calling. The eternal

challenge to teachers is to discover the true nature of the child and to help him to bring to full blossom the promise that is in him. This is not to deny teaching the heavy responsibility of helping the weak to walk better, be it in reading or writing or what-not. But as teachers develop the good that is in a child, these strengths enable him to take a significant place in the group life that in turn may lead to some improvement in his limitations. By feeling an importance about something that he can do, and being encouraged in it, the student is more apt to feel the need to improve, for example, his reading or his written expression.

Schools should continue to experiment with special courses, such as the so-called remedial courses, but such operation should go forward with full appreciation of this total picture of the child's possible development. The so-called remedial class comes from that line of educational thinking which respects children as individuals, with need at times for special grouping for special instruction. The remedial movement is relatively new; the years ahead, then, should bring many new developments in the approach. But as we set out to help the child in this way, let's not deny him the satisfaction of ex-

pressing his talents and the development that comes with it. As we give him time in the one, let's not deny him time in the other.

*62. The school that judges pupil worth on the basis of scholastic aptitude and accomplishment denies the principle of individual worth that is the basis of American democracy.*

The higher the grade level on the educational ladder extending from kindergarten on up through college, the greater the respect that seems to be paid to scholastic accomplishment for its own sake.

Colleges as a whole show little interest in the general worth of the individual student if his scholastic attainments fall below the standards that have been set for college work. In the scheme of values on the college campus, fine character and the ability to co-operate well with the group do not offset poor reading ability and the lack of the art of expressing oneself in written composition. The law of the campus is one that judges student worth on the basis of scholastic aptitude and accomplishment. Individual professors may recognize in their



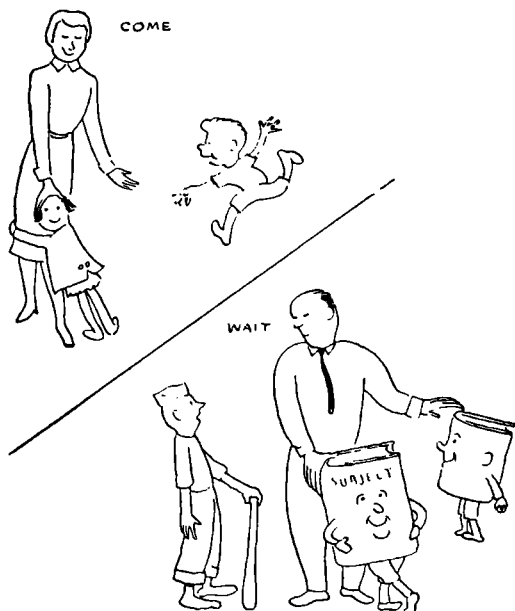
students the more personal qualities asked of the American citizen, but the law of the campus leaves the professor no way to give credit for them in his grade book.

At the kindergarten level, the teacher faces a group of children with highly individualistic tendencies. They have not yet learned to subject personal whims to behavior that respects the welfare of the group. Such a teacher has no subject curriculum to bother her, and she begins instruction with the child, working with his relationships with the group. The matching of letters of the alphabet, the counting by numbers up to ten, the careful observation of pictures, and similar activities that bear relationship to the more formal schooling above, are not the center of the program. Group behavior, with respect for each child's rights, is foremost.

As children move on up through the primary grades, this emphasis upon individual worth and respect for the worth and the rights of the others is maintained. The more formal aspects of schooling are gradually added—longer sentences and paragraphs to read, cursive writing to supplement the early manuscript, arithmetic as such, longer talks before the group, and so on. But in no sense does

this program crowd out the training in democratic living that has by then so well established itself. Nor does it minimize the teacher's devotion to individual differences. The individualization of instruction is apparent.

As children move on up through the intermediate grades, there appears for the first time the real danger of the school placing the performance on



JUST A MATTER OF DIFFERENCES IN VALUES •

subjects as the basis for judging student worth. The pressure of formal tasks makes the slow or incompetent stand out more and more. As long as one teacher has the class most of the day, as is customary in the fifth and sixth grades, he can protect the ideals set in earlier years—the ideal of placing the worth of the pupil first, and that of emphasizing good citizenship in the group life.

As the junior high grades are reached, the plan of school organization shifts, and a pupil finds himself going to half a dozen different teachers a day, each for a different subject. It is at this point on the educational ladder that there is the danger of the shift over in values, of amalgamating pupil worth with subject accomplishment. For instance, a teacher of English has five different classes during the day, each with thirty-five or forty students. Since she sees each pupil only forty-five or fifty minutes a day, she does so mainly through his performance in her subject, English. She does not have the opportunity to see him work all day, day in and day out, as a citizen-member of a classroom group, as did the teacher in the fourth or fifth grade. As hard as it may be to do so, there is still the invitation for her to place his general worth ahead of his subject worth.

And so the student moves on through the senior high school and possibly into the college. By now he has established himself as a particular type of student, good, poor, or indifferent, and by that he is so often judged. But, as pointed out previously, for any class group—second-graders or twelfth-graders—it is normal for them to present a broad range of ability. Yet, in our democratic scheme of things, each of these individuals is of great worth. Consequently, the school that is true to this American principle must guard against judging pupil worth only on the basis of aptitude for, and performance in, school tasks.

And so it is, in the continuous study and reorganization of schools the teacher plays the significant role. Always accepting and appreciating what has stood the test of time, always seeking what will make teaching more effective. Always with one eye on the welfare of the individual child, always with the other on the welfare of the group life that is America. With the complaints of a few patrons ringing in one ear, and the plaudits of the bulk of them deafening the other, the American teacher continues the march to an ever-improving program of education.

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